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**THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, RELIGION AND POLITICS IN POST-  
COMMUNIST POLAND: SECULARISATION AND  
REPUBLICANISATION  
1989-2007**

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**Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Religious Studies**

**The Open University**

**October 2012**

DATE OF SUBMISSION: 4 OCTOBER 2012

DATE OF AWARD: 13 AUGUST 2013

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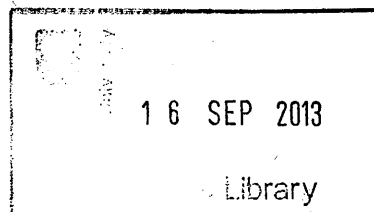
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## Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between religion and politics in post-communist Poland. Its focus is on how religion continues to maintain high salience and visibility in Polish public life despite falling individual religiosity. The study draws on theories of secularisation and republicisation, and aims to assess their applicability to the Polish case study. Based on an analysis of the relationship between religion and politics in Poland, this thesis argues that the continued public presence of religion is due to historical factors, notably the legacy of the communist era, which enabled the institutionalisation of a position of influence for the Polish Roman Catholic Church that was consolidated during the early post-communist period (1989-1993). It is the historical legacy of the Catholic Church acting as a critic of the government and a symbolic representative of the nation as well as institutional interests of both the Church and key political actors that preserve the status quo. The research material that this thesis analyses consists of Polish sources concerning the Church, religion and politics in Poland, including primary sources such as Church and government documents and press, as well as secondary sources such as academic journals and interviews with key Polish academics. The main aim of the research is to investigate the connections between the communist-era past and contemporary institutional interests and the links between religious and political groups in modern democratic Poland.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Open University for funding the research for this thesis through a PhD studentship grant.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my Open University supervisors, David Herbert, Graham Harvey and John Wolffe, without whom I would never have been able to complete my thesis. All three of them have helped me a great deal by providing detailed and insightful feedback. I am particularly grateful to David, who—despite moving on to Groningen University and then the University of Agder—agreed to stay on as my supervisor. Through his readings of my work, he has pushed me to challenge my ideas and develop my thesis further.

My research idea developed during my studies at the UCL School for Slavonic and East European Studies, and I would like to thank Richard Mole and Katarzyna Zechenter for their comments and guidance in the early stages of my work. I am also grateful to my undergraduate students at SSEES for their enthusiasm for the subject of Eastern European politics, and for asking insightful questions about Poland, stimulating me to develop my research.

The staff at the Open University, SSEES and University of Wroclaw libraries have always been helpful. I would further like to thank Jeremy Lowe and Nicola Hawley, who have helped me a lot with proofreading and final editing of this thesis.

Last (but not least!) my thanks go to my parents and my wife Lika for their inspiration, support and endless patience for my work.

## List of Abbreviations

- AWS – Solidarity Electoral Action (Polish: Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność)
- CPSU – Communist Party of the Soviet Union
- GKK – Main Commission of Priests (Polish: *Główna Komisja Księży*)
- GW – Electoral Gazette (Polish: Gazeta Wyborcza)
- IPN – Institute of National Remembrance
- KOR – Workers’ Defence Committee (Polish: Komitet Obrony Robotników)
- KPN – Confederation of Independent Poland (Polish: Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej)
- KRRiT – National Broadcasting Council (Polish: Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji)
- KUL – Catholic University of Lublin (Polish: Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski)
- LPR – League of Polish Families (Polish: Liga Polskich Rodzin)
- PGK – Parliamentary Women’s Group (Polish: Parlamentarna Grupa Kobiet).
- PRE – Polish Ecumenical Council (Polish: Polska Rada Ekumeniczna)
- PiS – Law and Justice Party (Polish: Prawo i Sprawiedliwość)
- PC – Centre Agreement (Polish: Porozumienie Centrum)
- PKWN – Polish Committee of National Liberation (Polish: Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego)
- PO – Civic Platform (Polish: Platforma Obywatelska)
- PRCC – Polish Roman Catholic Church (Polish: Kościół Rzymskokatolicki)
- PRL – Polish People’s Republic (Polish: Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa)
- PSL – Polish Peasants’ Party (Polish: Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe)
- PZPR – Polish United Workers’ Party (Polish: Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza)
- RM – Radio Maryja
- RMG – Radio Maryja Group (Polish: Grupa Radia Maryja)

RMP – Young Poland Movement (Polish: Ruch Młodej Polski)

ROP – Peace Defenders' Movement (Polish: Ruch Obrońców Pokoju)

ROPCiO - Movement for Defense of Human and Civic Rights (Polish: Ruch Obrony Praw Człowieka i Obywatela)

SLD – Democratic Left Alliance (Polish: Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej)

SO – Self-Defence Party (Polish: Samoobrona)

SOW – Association of War Victims (Polish: Stowarzyszenie Ofiar Wojny)

SP – Labour Party (Polish: Stronnictwo Pracy)

SW – Fighting Solidarity (Polish: Solidarność Walcząca)

TPD – Childrens' Friends' Society (Polish: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Dzieci)

UB - Office of Security (Polish: Urząd Bezpieczeństwa)

UP – Labour Union (Polish: Unia Pracy)

UD – Democratic Union (Polish: Unia Demokratyczna)

UW – Freedom Union (Polish: Unia Wolności)

WAK – Catholic Electoral Action (Polish: Wyborcza Akcja Katolicka)

WVS – World Value Survey

ZChN – Christian-National Union (Polish: Zjednoczenie Chrześcijańsko-Narodowe)

ZMP – Union of Polish Youth (Polish: Związek Młodzieży Polskiej)

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## Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the changes in the relationship between religion, politics and society in post-1989 Poland, and assess the continued public presence of religion in Polish society. This enquiry is set in the context of decreasing individual religious vitality, and the social as well as political transformation of the country after the collapse of communism. The thesis will be critically re-examining the history of religion and politics in communist and post-communist Poland in the light of secularisation theories, bringing together sociological and political science approaches to suggest a new republicisation perspective.<sup>1</sup>

Although public religion has become an increasingly popular object of research in the social sciences (Berger 1999; Casanova 2008; Norris and Inglehart 2004), scholarly approaches to religious change have often neglected the study of religious authority and religious actors and their relationship with the polity. Mainstream theories of secularisation focus on the modern sociological phenomena underpinning the process, such as modernisation, differentiation, rationalisation, individualisation and societalisation, with less regard for the cultural specificity of the countries in question (Tschannen 1991). Those theories also refer mostly to individual religiosity indicators, such as church attendance or declining religious belief, with much less attention paid to the role of religious actors and institutions—which is arguably more important in assessing the social significance of religion. I aim to redress both of those imbalances, critically examining the role of religion in the public life of contemporary Poland through the lens of secularisation theories, balancing attention to individual level factors with consideration of institutional and collective influences on actors.

This thesis argues that understanding the role of religion in today's Poland can only be achieved through an analysis of the interests and behaviour of the main actors, and the

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<sup>1</sup> See Herbert and Fras (2009).

institutional and political framework within which they operate. Due consideration also needs to be paid to the historical and cultural background that largely defines the social and political landscape in post-communist Poland, particularly the heritage of the communist era and the last years of the old regime.

My interest in this subject began with the study of the high visibility of religion and religious issues in Poland's public life two decades after the collapse of communism, and the beginning of democratic transformation, modernisation and Euro-Atlantic integration.<sup>2</sup> Contemporary Poland has undergone significant socio-political changes, including changes in the religious context. Although Poland was historically a multi-religious and multicultural country, since the Second World War it has been dominated by Roman Catholicism. 95% of Poles now declare themselves as Catholic (RAS 2010), and the largest minority religious community, Christian Orthodoxy, accounts for only 2% of the population (WVS 2012).

Religion and national identity have been closely related in Poland's history, particularly since the late-18<sup>th</sup> century partition period. A major change occurred once Poland became a Soviet satellite state in 1945. Religion, although controlled and driven from the public sphere by the communist authorities, remained vibrant at the level of individual religiosity, both in terms of belief and practice, making religious practice integral to the resistance to post-war Soviet hegemony. Although the activities of the Polish Roman Catholic Church (PRCC), the largest religious institution in the country, were restricted by communist authorities, the Church enjoyed much more freedom than religious organisations in the Soviet Union (where they were virtually abolished).

Indeed, the PRCC played a significant political role in Poland before 1989. The Church's relative autonomy allowed it to become a hub for different anti-government initiatives. Since

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<sup>2</sup> Entering the European Union and NATO were seen as the two most important steps in shedding the communist legacy for Poland; they have been portrayed as one process, referred to as Euro-Atlantic integration.

the end of the Stalinist period, PRCC gradually become politicised and acted as a mediation channel between social groups in process referred to as praetorianism (Huntington 1968).

This became particularly relevant in the 1980s, the decade of Solidarity, martial law and democratic revolution in Poland. The PRCC supported Solidarity in a number of ways. Following the strikes in Gdańsk and other cities on the Baltic coast in 1980, the Church provided logistical support to opposition groups and individuals. This was only possible for two reasons: power and independence. The Church was the biggest non-state social institution in the People's Republic of Poland; it was relatively independent from the communist authorities and largely opposed to its main policies—especially those relating to the exclusive status of the communist party, separation of Church and state and the suppression of religion in the public realm.

It is in this context that the PRCC fiercely defended its institutional rights and privileges. Perhaps surprisingly, this necessitated a certain level of co-operation with the communist authorities. As I aim to show, the Church, even though often identified with the opposition, actually sided with the government on a number of crucial issues, and used all possible opportunities to secure its interests (see Chapter 3). And it was by walking this very fine line between collusion and opposition that the PRCC was able to form a vital part of Polish politics after the first democratic elections in 1989. The collapse of state structures and the dramatic ideological shift in Polish political life during this period, combined with the stability of the PRCC's policies and leadership, further fuelled this growing assertiveness.

Polish post-communist politics—i.e. following the 1989 elections—thus provide an intriguing case study of the interaction between religion and politics within the wider processes of social, economic, cultural and political modernisation. The PRCC, as the biggest religious organisation, remained—and remains—at the centre of public life. Fierce conflicts between those seeking to extend the Church's authority and those seeking to limit it have emerged since 1989; consequently, the key public debates of the 1990s were largely influenced by religious rhetoric and Church involvement.

During the first phase of transformation, between 1989 and 1993, the Church managed to push through a number of their policies. Even debates on supposedly ‘secular’ legal issues, such as the creation of the post of the Citizens’ Ombudsman, have also been influenced by the Catholic Church, its social doctrine and actions. Controversial issues such as prenatal examinations, the right to abortion and the return of Catholic theology to public schools have stirred social conflict and fervent discussions in recent years. The debate on the new Polish constitution in the early 1990s was largely influenced by the question of the place of religious values in the polity and whether Catholicism should be recognised as the leading religious denomination in Poland. All of those debates were characterised by organised and structured PRCC lobbying and/or campaigning on the one hand, and uncertain policy responses from the weak, reforming state institutions coming to terms with a shift from communism to liberal democracy on the other. Through an analysis of the Church’s actions and the response of state and political institutions in the first years of transformation, this thesis aims to demonstrate that this period (1989-1993) was crucial for sustaining the republicisation of religion in the country for years to come.

Right-wing political parties, most of which had their roots in the Solidarity movement, formed governments throughout the 1990s. Their close relationship with the PRCC guaranteed the status quo in church-state relations and the continued republicisation of religion (see Chapter 5). With the coming to power of a left-wing coalition of the Democratic Left Alliance (‘Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej’, SLD, heir to the communist Polish United Workers Party) and Polish Peasants’ Party (‘Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe’, PSL) with roots in the communist peasant movement) between 2000 and 2005, however, Polish politics were less exposed to religious arguments and Church intervention. On the other hand, the post-communist Miller government (2001-2004) entered into an unwritten alliance with the Church over abortion and European integration matters, assuring the PRCC that the government would not reform

abortion laws, in exchange for the Church's support for European enlargement (Janicki and Władyka 2009).

Religion continued to dominate Polish political discourse on a number of matters at the beginning of the new century. European integration remains one of the most contentious issues in Polish political life, largely thanks to the opposition of right-wing and Church-related groups and organisations towards the European Union. The EU enlargement process, completed in 2004, proved a major challenge to Poland, as a conservative Catholic country attempting to negotiate its entry and to establish bidding power within the largely secular European Union.<sup>3</sup> Bishop Pieronek, provost of the influential Papal Theological Academy in Cracow, called the Polish EU accession a 'great apostolic assignment' for Poland and Polish Catholics (Pieronek 1997). Debates on the European Constitution, particularly the role of Christianity and Christian rhetoric (the so-called 'God clause') and references to the Christian heritage of Europe, have recently become a controversial aspect of Polish representation in the European Convention, leading to a significant dispute within the EU regarding references to God and Christianity in the Constitution text (Casanova 2004).

The 2005 Polish general and presidential elections again raised the issue of the secular character of the state and the idea of religious neutrality in public life; Polish politics were never entirely secular, and the 2005 elections only reinforced this state of affairs. The triumphant party, Law and Justice ('Prawo i Sprawiedliwość', PiS), in coalition with the pro-Catholic League of Polish Families ('Liga Polskich Rodzin', LPR), went against the moderately secular trend that had gradually developed in Polish public life in the early 2000s. Plans for further restrictions on abortion, the subsidising of Church investment projects and the inclusion of religion on the list of A-level exams, amongst other initiatives, seemed to drive the seemingly unlikely coalition

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<sup>3</sup> Although European integration processes were influenced by the Christian Democrats (see Kaiser 2007), today's EU member states are largely secular, and so is the politics of the EU as an organisation. For the PRCC's policy towards the EU, see also Chapter 5.

forward for almost two years. Lech Kaczyński, having been elected president in 2005 on a conservative and non-modernisation ticket, signalled his intention to effect a swift return to a more religiously influenced state through the use of religious symbols and reliance on Church support in politics by choosing the Vatican as the destination of his first foreign visit (Rzeczpospolita 2007). My analysis of the Law and Justice government's actions and attitudes towards church-state relations and the role of religion in public life (Chapter 5) shows how religion was republicised even further within a short period of time all due to the activities of state and political actors.

And yet, at the same time, rates of individual religious practice in Poland have fallen almost continuously over the last 20 years. On the one hand, Poland remains one of the most religious societies in Europe in terms of religious practice and belief. Religion remains important for a majority of Polish citizens—a very high rate in comparison with Western European countries considered to be highly secularised, such as the United Kingdom or the Netherlands (see Table 1). On the other hand the main indicators of religious practice and belief in Poland are in steady decline (Mariański 2004). Between 1990 and 2005, the number of people who regularly (at least once a month) attended church services dropped from 85.6% to 75.5%. In the case of those attending church at least once a week, the drop was even more marked—down from 60% to 40% (see Table 1). The change is even greater for the younger generations: between 1988 and 2005, the number of young people practising regularly (i.e. aged 13-25) dropped from 50% to 36%, while the number of those practising only infrequently rose from 10% to 19%, and those not practising religion at all increased from 4% to 10% (WVS 2010; Przeciszewski 2009; see also Table 4).

These numbers and tendencies reflect an important shift in the place of religion in modern Poland. The PRCC certainly remains the most important religious organisation in the country, as an overwhelming majority of Poles still declare that they belong to the Catholic Church (WVS 2012). Its authority, however, is suffering on numerous fronts. The moral

influence of the PRCC, for instance, is diminishing rapidly. In 1990, 80.1% of respondents believed that the Church could provide answers to their moral problems. By 2005, this number had dropped to 66.1%. When it comes to the Church's authority in the social sphere, there has been a marked change as well. In 1990, 52% of Poles thought that churches can give answers to social problems, whereas 48% disagreed with this statement. By 1999, the numbers changed to 39% and 61%, respectively (WVS 2012; see Table 1). Consequently, Poles no longer tend to follow the social teachings of the Church: in a recent poll, 60% of respondents supported the use of IVF treatment, despite the Church's opposition to it, with only 25% siding with the PRCC. The same proportion of respondents supported the idea of state-financed contraception. Almost 40% of respondents agreed that there should be a liberalisation of the abortion law (Szostkiewicz 2009). Among young people, the influence of the social teachings of the Church is even lower: 80% of urban youth approve of pre-marital sex, whereas the Church still staunchly opposes it (Pawlina 2006). What is more, an overwhelming majority of Poles oppose Church leaders' influence on government and voting behaviour (80% and 85%, respectively) (WVS 2012; see Table 1). The PRCC's own ranks are decreasing alongside its social standing. Between 1994 and 2008, the number of priestly vocations has decreased by 15%; the number of nuns is also in steady decline (Solarczyk 2013; see also Table 3).

Religiosity statistics from 1988-2008 suggest that Poland's individual religiosity, including church attendance and moral authority among community members, shows no sign of bottoming out. What is more, younger generations are much more eager to abandon religious rituals and defy the PRCC's moral guidance (Dębowski 2008). Polish Catholicism's social base is shrinking, and the link between national and religious identity is gradually weakening.

But here there is a paradox. Despite this dwindling significance in people's personal lives, the Church maintains a strong presence in the public sphere. Consequently, the popular perception is that the Church has far too much influence on Polish politics (Większość Polaków 2007). Here again, there appears to be a stark difference with Western European countries.

While in the UK and Netherlands, 20-30% of respondents strongly disagree with religious leaders’ influence on voting patterns, the Poland the rate of strong disapproval is twice as high. The same pattern can be observed when it comes to assessing religious leaders’ influence on government—here again Poles are twice as likely to strongly disagree with it as British or Dutch respondents (see Table 1).

While rates of religious observance in Poland continue fall, and while more and more people are turning away from Church teachings, the PRCC continues to dominate Polish public life. A key aim of this study is to seek to explain why this discrepancy exists.

**Table 1. Religion, religious institutions, politics and society in Poland, UK and the Netherlands (1990-1999). Source: WVS.**

Poland	1990	1999
How important is God in your life	54.5 % very important	52.1 % very important
How often do you attend religious services	53.4 % once a week 18.0 % once a month 5.9 % holidays only	49.0 % once a week 17.7 % once a month 13.6 % holidays only
Churches give answers: the social problems	48.1 % no 51.9 % yes	60.7 % no 39.3 % yes
Religious leaders should not influence government		48.9% agree strongly 32.0% agree
Religious leaders should not influence how people vote		53.9 % agree strongly 31.8 % agree
United Kingdom		
How important is God in your life	16.0 % very important	14.4 % very important
How often do you attend religious services	9.0 % once a week 10.4 % one a month 8.2 % holidays only	8.6 % once a week 4.5 % once a month 7.7 % holidays only
Churches give answers: the social problems	70.8 % 29.2 %	73.0 % no 27.0 % yes
Religious leaders should not influence government		20.4 % agree strongly 44.9 % agree
Religious leaders should not influence how people vote		25.4 % agree strongly 44.2 % agree
The Netherlands		
How important is God in your life	12.4 % very important	11.7 % very important
How often do you attend religious services	16.3 % once a week 9.7 % once a month 8.7 % once holidays	9.6 % once a week 11.3 % once a month 7.5 % only holidays
Churches give answers: the social problems	68.9 % no 31.1 % yes	63.2 % no 36.8 % yes
Religious leaders should not influence government		22.1 % strongly agree 37.8 % agree
Religious leaders should not influence how people vote		28.3 % strongly agree 37.4 % agree



**Table 2. Church attendance rates in Poland. Source: ISKK SAC.**

Year	1980	1999	2008
Regular (weekly) church attendance as percentage of population	51%	46.9%	40.4%

**Table 3. Catholic Seminary graduation rates in Poland. Source: ISKK SAC.**

	1994	2001	2008
Number of graduates	7180	6917	6236

**Table 4. Youth religiosity in Poland. Source: ISKK SAC, Pawlina 2006, Zaręba 2007.**

	1988	1998	2005
Deeply religious	17.9	10.1	9.5
Religious	61.8	57.7	52.1
Regular (weekly) church attendance	50.0 %	n/a	36 %
Do not attend church services	4%	n/a	10%

Responding to the above questions requires an analysis of the place of religion in Poland's public life, not only within the first two decades of transformation, but also the historical background, which continues to influence matters to this day. This, in turn, requires an understanding of key definitions, including of religion and secularisation. In most general terms, religion is commonly taken to refer to matters of the transcendent, supernatural or divine, but this thesis draws mostly from sociological and political science theories, and so it focuses on the social dimension of religion, including its values, practices and institutions. The Polish case study shows that religion's social and institutional influence outweighs the individual and spiritual aspect of religion in contemporary Poland.

Secularisation, on the other hand, implies a diminishment in the influence or control of religion over social life. Broader definitions of the term (Dobbelaere 2001) suggest that secularisation can be defined on three levels: societal, institutional and individual. Whereas all are crucial to understanding the secularisation phenomenon, this thesis mostly examines the first two dimensions, because, as will become evident as the analysis develops, religion can remain relevant in a society independently of individual religiosity levels.

As secularisation is a complex and lengthy process, the second important dimension of secularisation (besides its reach within the society) is its temporal development. Moyser (1991) proposes a five-step model of political secularisation, which can be applied to the analysis of social and institutional secularisation in contemporary Poland. The first stage of political secularisation refers to the constitutional sphere. It is expressed through the lack of legal recognition and support for religion and any particular religious institution or group. The following stage, policy secularisation, can be identified as a consequence of the entry of state institutions into policy domains previously assigned to, or reserved for, religious bodies. Institutional secularisation, the third stage of political secularisation, occurs when religious institutions and structures lose their lobbying power and influence on political organisations. Agenda secularisation, the fourth expression of the secularisation process, can be observed when political society has no overtly religious content. And finally, ideological secularisation occurs when values and belief systems that function within the political realm are no longer phrased in religious terms (Moyser 1991:14-15). All of the above-mentioned stages will be referred to in the research chapters of this thesis (chapters 3-5). The research conducted in the key chapters of this thesis indicates that socio-institutional secularisation can develop independently of individual-level secularisation. Furthermore, the post-1989 political history of democratic Poland suggests that political secularisation can be stopped or even reversed due to the activities of key actors representing key pillars of the polity–state as well as political and civil society—notably due to the co-operation between governments and the PRCC.

## Research question

The main question to be explained in this thesis is why, despite evidence of substantial individual secularisation, religion has maintained its high relevance in Polish public life after the fall of communism in 1989. The three most relevant issues under scrutiny are: how did religion retain such a prominent place in Polish public life after communism? Under what conditions does religion remain politically salient and publicly visible, even in the face of falling individual religiosity and rapid social modernisation? Why is the trend towards secularisation not occurring in the Polish public sphere?

Despite falling individual religiosity rates and rapid social transformation, religion—and particularly the PRCC as the main religious institution in the country—has preserved an authoritative role in Polish society, notably in the public sphere. In line with most predictions of sociologists and political scientists, religion returned to the public sphere after the fall of communism (see Ost 2005)—a process referred to as republicisation—a re-emergence in the public realm without a necessary causal link to individual religiosity (Herbert 2007). Since then, however, the course of secularisation in Poland has not followed the predictions of mainstream secularisation theories (outlined by Moyser, above). Early theories of secularisation developed in the 1960s and 1970s (Berger 1969; Luckmann 1970; Wilson 1966), and dominated the study of religious change over the following decades, suggesting that modernisation leads to a decline of religion—both on the social and individual levels (Berger 1999:3). Those first secularisation theories, although distinct from one another, share a number of concepts seen as pre-conditions for secularisation: differentiation, rationalisation, individualisation and societalisation, as systematised by Olivier Tschannen (1991) within the ‘secularization paradigm’.

All of the above concepts can be identified in contemporary Poland. Post-communist Poland embarked upon a journey of modernisation even before the first democratic elections in June 1989: from the mid-1980s, the authorities experimented with licensing private economic

activity and cautiously allowing more civic freedoms, for example. After the collapse of communism, institutional changes were almost all-encompassing. Almost all state institutions have been reformed through very significant staff changes, policy changes and new institutional mechanisms (Regulska 2009). The whole political system was reshaped. The economy switched from central management to free-market capitalism. The crumbling welfare network of the previous regime had largely collapsed, leading to a steep rise in unemployment and exacerbating social tensions. Over the next two decades, Poland changed beyond recognition. Between 1992 and 2002 alone, Poland's GDP more than trebled (CSIOZ 2008). Poland affirmed its integration with the West by entering NATO in 1998 and the European Union in 2004. As a major recipient of EU funds and its emergence as a strong capitalist economy, it developed faster than its Western neighbours. In 2010, Poland overtook the Netherlands to become the EU's sixth-largest economy, and continued to defy the global economic crisis (Sikorski 2011).

The second pre-condition of secularisation—differentiation—takes place within a domain of meaning, such as education or medicine, in which religiously derived principles have been the dominant governing logic; this becomes contested by other, rival logics, that may in turn become dominant (Heelas 1998:2). Even though some of the aforementioned domains of public and political life may not have been entirely religious, the official Church was dominant within them; however, as part of the differentiation process, it is assumed that it would cease to be so. As religion comes to be defined in terms of individual conscience, the differentiation process accelerates the division between the public and private realms—one being the world of public activity; the other the world of private life—contributing to a distinction between public and private behaviour in the religious sphere. However, in the differentiation process in Poland this did not happen; instead, religion fragmented and split between other spheres, retaining some influence on economics, politics, culture and ethics (although no longer controlling any of them).

The third term, rationalisation, refers to the process through which logic and scientific explanations replace those that refer to customs, tradition and supernatural agency. This is a process of great significance to the secularisation processes, as it limits the explanatory powers of religious groups and institutions. In a 'rationalised' society, religious arguments lose their saliency, which in turn leads to decreased potential for religion to interfere with politics and other spheres of social life. Post-1989 Poland, undergoing rapid westernisation and modernisation, focusing on increasing material wealth and catching up with Western Europe, provided a fertile ground for rationalisation. Although religious arguments have more saliency than in Western Europe in areas such as politics, public policy or morality (see Chapter 4), the overall trend is towards rationalisation of the public sphere.

The co-existence of modernisation, rationalisation, differentiation and falling levels of individual religiosity with a stable presence of religion in public life runs contrary to most secularisation theories. The secularisation thesis predicts that modernising European societies become more and more secular in the modernisation process, witnessing the waning influence of religion accompanied by the parallel development of differentiation, rationalisation and other processes (see Chapter 2).

This thesis makes an attempt to explain this anomalous development. Alternatives to secularisation theories that link secularisation with cultural and historical study, such as Bruce's cultural defence/transition theory (1998 and 2009), Pickel's contextual secularisation theory (2009) and Smith's concept of 'secular revolution' (2003) offer some assistance in understanding the unusual course of secularisation in Poland.

Cultural defence is thought to be a reaction of religious institutions/organisations to secularisation: in other words, strengthened religious identity that develops as a defensive measure in a fight with a hostile force, whether an actor (occupant) or ideology (secular or religious doctrine)—a process noticeable in communist Poland, where a secular communist identity, aimed at eroding the religious identity of the society, actually provoked the opposite

reaction in some social groups and actors. Cultural transition occurs when the 'hostile force' is not an external actor or ideology but rather a cultural process, such as modernisation or migration. According to Bruce (2009), religious identity and religious organisations provide a source of stability in a changing environment, where they grow in power and importance. Bruce's theory has limited relevance to the Polish case, however. Although cultural defence was a driving mechanism that sustained Polish religiosity during the communist years, in the absence of a hostile force in post-1989 Poland this argument loses its relevance. The religious identity of the Catholic majority of Poles has weakened gradually over the last two decades (Marianski 2004). As for cultural transition: despite some attempts made by the Polish Church to portray modernising forces as the enemy of faith, particularly in the early 1990s, no cultural mobilisation mechanism could be observed in post-communist Poland. Paradoxically, a party campaigning for religious-cultural mobilisation and defence (Law and Justice) won the general election in 2005, at the height of Poland's economic growth, and when the transition to a functioning free market economy had been completed.

Christian Smith (2003) proposes to 'move agency, interests, power, resources, mobilization, strategy, and conflict to the foreground' (2003:vii) in analysing the social dimension of secularisation. Smith claims that secularisation in the US was an outcome of a struggle between conflicting interest groups attempting to control society. This claim is backed by a number of examples from the fields of education, science, public morality and human rights, and the patterns they have followed in 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century America. Smith's account is helpful in identifying certain causal factors shaping the relationship between religion and public life in contemporary Poland. This thesis argues that it is institutional factors, such as relations between state and religious actors, historical and cultural patterns and the institutional interests of both religious and political actors, which shape the state of religious affairs in Poland's public life. Therefore, the main body of research-material presented (see below) pertains to the history of Polish religiosity and its influence on contemporary state of affairs, as

well as relations between religion, notably the biggest religious actor—the PRCC—and the polity in today’s Poland. Particular attention is paid to the position of the Polish Roman Catholic Church as the biggest religious institution in the country with regard to the main pillars of the modern polity, including the state, political society and civil society. Pickel (2009) adds to this discussion by calling for a more contextualised approach to the study of secularisation, combining the process-related approach with the study of history and institutions as proposed by Smith.

David Herbert’s republicisation thesis (2007, 2011) argues in a similar fashion that traditional process-oriented approaches to secularisation do not account for a rapid return of religion to the public sphere. According to the republicisation thesis, it is mainly the functionalisation of religion, combined with the protest character of religion and a breakdown in confidence in various forms of secularisation, which sustains the presence of religion in public life. Herbert also suggests that social differentiation processes can have an opposite effect on religious discourses to that predicted by secularisation theory, and that a wider dissemination of religious content facilitated by the media contributes to the intensification of religious presence in both private and public life. Herbert also contends that the republicisation of religions is not conditional upon religious actors’ work in the field of a ‘narrow religious sphere’, but also in secular spheres such as law, politics and media (Herbert 2011:626). Arguments raised by Herbert are relevant in today’s Poland, where individual religiosity rates are falling, but where the prevalence of religious content in mainstream politics and the strength of radical religious media multiply the presence of religion in society.

## **Applicability beyond the case study**

The relevance of the case study presented is both specific to the Polish case and the broader study of religion, politics and religious change. The research into the place of religion in Polish public life, the role of the Church and the links between religion and politics presented in chapters 3-5 is largely restricted to the case study. All of the analysed phenomena are incredibly complex, and I do not aim to present a full picture of the place religion played—and plays—in post-communist Poland. My focus is on a number of interrelated processes that caused Polish public life to become largely non-secular through religious republicisation, allowing religion to emerge from the shadows of communist rule, when public displays of religious observance were restricted. Many conclusions from this study are country-specific, and so it is the mediation of secularisation processes through history, culture and institutions that has an important role in the analysis of Polish public life conducted in this thesis.

However, my conclusions have wider applicability, and they can contribute to the study of religion and politics in Central and Eastern Europe. The thesis reinterprets the role of religion in communist-era Poland, shedding new light on church-state relations in an authoritarian regime, and the secretive character of such relations. Furthermore, the thesis analyses the rapid transformation of the Polish state and society in the post-1989 period, and the role religion and the Church played in the process, notably in the first years of transformation (1989-1993). Research presented in chapters 3-5 brings together the analysis of two historical periods (the late years of the communist era and the first years of the democratic period) that have so far mostly been considered in isolation. A number of conclusions drawn from this study have wider applicability to the study of secularisation in post-communist and other transition countries. The role that religion can and does play in the political culture of developing and rapidly changing social systems, particularly in the post-communist world, has been neglected. This thesis suggests that greater attention should be paid to institutions, and to state, political and



civil society actors, and the role of institutionalisation in sustaining the republicisation of religion. Furthermore, this thesis argues that historical and cultural factors, such as path dependence and the links between religion and identity, should be considered in depth when analysing the course of secularisation.

## **Methods**

This thesis is based on a critical-realist approach to social sciences. The main ontological and epistemological premises are that social reality is objectively existent, and our knowledge of it is mediated by concepts (theories). In social sciences, objects of research are socially produced and socially defined; thus, knowledge is fallible—but not all kinds of knowledge are fallible to the same extent (Danemark et al. 2002:30-36). This thesis refers to a number of established theories of secularisation and religious change as ways of interpreting social reality and analysing the relationship between religion and politics in Poland.

As reality exists independently of human concepts of it, it cannot be accessed through empirical observation alone. Science, as a practical, social activity, influences reality, provoking a double hermeneutics of social research. Its outcomes are further limited by a double reduction, as the researcher's knowledge of reality is reduced to knowledge of particular events, which in turn is reduced to empirical observations thereof (Danemark et al. 2002:160). This thesis draws on a number of primary sources, including Church and government documents, as well as documents of Polish political parties, religious organisations and other political and civil society actors, to analyse the course of events and interests of actors. This is complemented by a number of secondary sources, including research material into Polish politics and religiosity which are used both as primary and secondary sources (as many sources are reinterpreted through abduction—see below). The critical, comparative examination of a variety of primary and

secondary sources assists in a reconstruction of statements and actions of polity actors (including state, political society and civil society groups as well as the PRCC) from different perspectives.

Although science's explanatory potential is limited by all of the above, critical realism assumes that the research process can be organised in such a way that will help the understanding of the relationship between the real world and our concepts about it (Danemark et al. 2002:41). These concepts can be formulated as theories, including metatheories (foundational assumptions), normative theories and descriptive theories (Sayer 1992:50). This thesis attempts to contribute to the latter, by abstracting and isolating fundamental qualities of the relationship between religion and politics and the course of religious change in post-1989 Poland. This is achieved through the use of two modes of inference used in critical realism—abduction and retrodution.

The first method—abduction—is a form of redescription and recontextualisation of research, starting from studying an empirical phenomenon (such as the behaviour of religious and political actors and institutions in Poland) and relating a rule to it, leading to a new supposition about the event. Through abduction, individual phenomena are recontextualised with the help of general concepts and categories (Jensen 1995:148). This thesis recontextualises the relationship between religion and politics in Poland, looking at the interests of and co-operation between religious actors, notably the PRCC, and Polish governments, both during the communist era and during the democratic transformation process. This is done to demonstrate that both key institutions in this process—the PRCC and the government—have a long track record of co-operation and bypassing other actors and institutions of the policy, including other political and civil society actors (see chapters 3 and 4). This thesis also redescribes the behaviour of the PRCC in post-communist Poland in terms of its instrumental approach to politics and state institutions, and its ability to implement its agenda through short-term alliances with a range of actors within the polity (see Chapter 5).

The second method used—retroduction—is a way of advancing from an empirical observation of events and arriving at a ‘conceptualisation of transfactual conditions’ (Danemark et al. 2002:96). Retroduction seeks the basic conditions for the phenomena under study, looking at social structures and relations. Through retroduction, accidental circumstances are abstracted in order to arrive at the general and universal. This thesis is focused on the phenomenon of religious change and its trajectory in post-communist Poland, using retroduction to explore social structures and relations between actors to understand why is there a disjunction between the levels of public presence of religion and individual religiosity. Through an analysis of the behaviour and statements of the main actors—notably the PRCC and other religious organisations affiliated to the Church (e.g. Catholic media), the government and political parties—this thesis tries to abstract the norms governing the relationship between main actors in Poland’s public life.

## Sources

This thesis is based on a range of primary and secondary Polish and English sources. Research material presented in chapters 3-5 is based mostly on primary and secondary Polish sources.<sup>4</sup> Those sources include official PRCC documents, such as circulars, Episcopal statements and press releases, as well as documents and statements issued by other religious actors, including Catholic media (notably the Radio Maryja Group, RMG). The sources also include Polish government documents, mostly pertaining to the policy areas examined in chapters 4 and 5. In addition to analysing Church documents and statements, I spent a substantial part of my research in Poland, gaining an in-depth understanding of the social and political situation in the

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<sup>4</sup> English-language resources on the topic are very scarce.

country. As the Polish literature on secularisation and religious change in contemporary Poland is scarce, I decided to interview researchers working in the field. The interviews I conducted while in Poland with political scientists and sociologists of religion covered a range of issues pertaining to religion, the Catholic Church and politics and public life in contemporary Poland, with particular reference to the transformation period (1989-1993) and the importance of religion two decades after the transformation.<sup>5</sup> My interviewees included Irena Borowik, Katarzyna Zielińska, Katarzyna Leszczyńska, Tomasz Dębowski and Józef Baniak. Irena Borowik, of the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, is a leading sociologist of religion in Poland, who has written extensively on the privatisation of religion and religion in Polish public life. Katarzyna Zielińska (Jagiellonian) wrote her PhD on secularisation theories, and has written about secularisation as well as freedom of religion and belief in contemporary Poland. Katarzyna Leszczyńska, of the AGH University of Science and Technology in Cracow, researched the Polish Church's role in public life, particularly its attitude towards European integration. Tomasz Dębowski, from the University of Wrocław, is a political scientist, and a key expert on minority religions in Poland, notably Protestant churches and the dialogue between Christianity and Judaism in contemporary Poland. Józef Baniak, from the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, is one of the leading researchers in the field of individual religiosity of Poles, having published on morality and religion, Polish clergy, laity in the Church, youth religiosity and religious values.

As my planned interviewees among political and Church leaders either ignored my request or refused to be interviewed, I had to rely on press and archives for their statements and opinions. In my research I focused on the most popular Polish daily newspapers; in order

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<sup>5</sup> In my initial research plan I also included politicians, Church and media figures among the proposed interviewees. I asked to interview key political leaders from right-wing parties, including Jarosław Kaczyński, Marek Jurek and Zbigniew Ziobro, and left-wing politicians such as Józef Pińor. None of the right-wing politicians responded to my request. J. Pińor initially agreed to an interview, but later cancelled it due to lack of time (European Parliament campaign of 2009). I also requested an interview with Adam Michnik, the editor-in-chief of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, but he refused on the grounds of 'not having the expertise to comment on matters of religion and politics'. I also tried to arrange interviews with PRCC leaders in Warsaw and Krakow, but received no response.

to obtain a balance of information and opinion, I looked at titles from across the political spectrum. Most of the material I use comes from the two largest dailies: the liberal *Gazeta Wyborcza* and the conservative *Rzeczpospolita*. I also researched the archives of the most influential weekly magazines, including the left-wing *Polityka* (Poland's most popular weekly magazine) and the right-wing *Wprost* and *Newsweek Polska*. I also use Catholic press sources, notably the liberal *Tygodnik Powszechny*, as well as the right-wing *Nasz Dziennik* (published by RMG) and *Gość Niedzielny* (the latter published by PRCC). I also referred to a small number of non-academic journals dealing with political and social issues, such as *Res Publica Nova* and *Wież*, as they covered the PRCC's public activities extensively and often interviewed PRCC officials. Press sources were used primarily as sources of the statements of Church authorities and political leaders, as well as sources of opinion on the relationship between religious and political actors. The latter category is particularly relevant in the case of the Catholic press and magazines, which remain low in circulation figures but are highly relevant because of their readership among the Catholic clergy. I have triangulated the primary material used to cross-examine the behaviour and discourse of political and religious actors (both individual and institutional) in the communist period and during the transformation years in order to get as accurate as possible insight into the motivation and interests of the actors studied.

The secondary literature used pertains mostly to current debates on religion, politics and secularisation and religious change (material presented in chapters 1 and 2). As Polish sources on secularisation are scarce, the sources used are mostly British and American publications from the fields of sociology of religion, political science and international relations. During the key period in the development of sociology of religion and theories of secularisation, Poland was part of the Soviet bloc. Sociology of religion was constrained by communist ideology, and thereby heavily politicised. A number of scholars working for state research institutions followed the guidelines of the official ideology by interpreting religion solely through the lens of Marxism-Leninism. This type of research aimed at supporting and legitimising the official

anti-religious policies of the state (Baniak 1981:V). On the other hand, a small pool of researchers linked to the Catholic Church oriented their research in opposition to the findings of the pro-government group, and their main agenda was to counter any arguments suggesting that Polish society is secularising (Borowik 2000:213). This dichotomy has a bearing on the research into religion and politics in Poland today, where many debates on the role of religion in society have political underpinnings (Mariański 2006). Sociology of religion remains a niche within the Polish academia, and the number of works published, particularly on the contemporary links between religion and politics, remains low. All of the above reasons contribute to the original character of this thesis. Although a number of (mostly Polish) authors have published in English on church-state relations and religion and politics in Poland after the fall of communism (Burdziej 2005; Borowik 1999 and 2010), none of the published work combines research into both communist era and the transformation years. As for studies of communist Poland, there is plenty mostly historical research on the topic in Polish (Dudek 1995; Gowin 1995; Żaryn 2003), but it focuses mostly on the Church's role as an opposition force, and often omits the PRCC's co-operation with communist authorities—thus limiting their relevance to this thesis.<sup>6</sup> One English monograph on the issue published in the early Solidarity years (Pomian-Szrednicki 1982) is used in Chapter 3 to illustrate the historical significance of religion in Poland.

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<sup>6</sup> All of the authors quoted are active in politics and government—Gowin is the serving Justice Minister, Dudek and Żaryn worked for the government-affiliated Institute of National Remembrance.

## Plan of the thesis

This thesis is divided into three main parts. In the first part, comprising chapters 1 and 2, I review the theoretical frameworks that underpin my research on the case study. In Chapter 1, I deal with the body of literature focused on the liberal democratic polity, religion and politics and the relationship between Church and state. In Chapter 2, I review a range of secularisation theories and current debates in this field, and apply them to the case study. The theoretical frameworks I set out allow me then to turn to the specific analysis of the role of religion in Poland.

The second part of the thesis, comprising Chapter 3, turns from the theoretical basis of the preceding chapters to look at the actual role of religious institutions, and the interactions between religion, statehood and national identity in Poland throughout history. I pay particular attention to the legacy of the communist era, and its importance both for contemporary church-state relations and the place of religion in Polish public life today. My main argument is that, particularly in the last years of the communist period, the Church increased its co-operation with the communist authorities, setting the background for its return to public life.

The third block of the dissertation, divided between chapters 4 and 5, deals with the contemporary situation of religion and public life in Poland. The former chapter deals with the first period of transition and systemic change, when state and political society were at their weakest and the whole socio-political structure of the country was reshaped. I argue that the four years of transition (1989-1993) were crucial for the shaping of relations between religion and politics, and notably between the PRCC and political organisations and governments. The following chapter deals with the aftermath of the first period of transformation, after a new constitution and Concordat were signed. It spans almost fifteen years of Polish democracy (1993-2007), and deals with the dynamics of religio-political relations during that period, as well as the course of secularisation.

The final two chapters are divided into thematic sub-sections dealing with the key issues that have arisen in relation to religion and politics in post-communist Poland, such as the abortion debate, religion in public education, European integration and religious pluralism.

The Conclusion offers answers to the research questions and summarises the research findings, including those pertaining to the relationship between religion and politics in contemporary Poland, as well as assessing the contribution of the thesis to the study of secularisation and religious change and offering directions for future research in the field.



## Chapter 1: Religion and Politics

This thesis is concerned with the relationship between religion and politics in contemporary Poland, and the influence of this relationship on secularisation and the republicisation of religion after the fall of communism. In this chapter, I introduce the basic terms and categories that will inform the study of religion and politics in Poland in the following chapters (3, 4 and 5).

This chapter argues that the relationship between religion and politics is crucial to understanding religious change in contemporary Poland, notably in relation to the secularisation processes. One of the key assumptions is that secularisation processes can be split between public and private spheres—and that the developments in both spheres can be independent of each other. In the Polish case study, this means that secularisation at an individual level can develop alongside the sustained republicisation of religion in the social sphere. Another premise is that certain secularisation mechanisms can be halted or even reversed promptly by key actors of the democratic polity (state, political society and civil society—see page 47 for details of Stepan's polity model). Furthermore, this chapter intends to show that the particular conditions of democratic transformation and the legacy of communist rule, such as the praetorian syndrome, the instability of state and political institutions in relation to religious actors (notably, the PRCC) and path dependency are key for the understanding of the place of religion in Polish society after 1989.

First, the two principal research objects, religion and politics, are introduced and defined. Then, the characteristics of liberal democratic regimes are presented together with the central features of contemporary politics in Poland: post-communist transformation and democratisation. The three aforementioned pillars of a modern democratic polity are subsequently set out, and the intersection of these pillars with religion, as well as current transformation processes in Poland, are analysed. Pertinent case studies and a short historical perspective on the relationship between religion and politics are also introduced. Finally, the

issue of decisive factors in mobilising religion in politics are examined and a particular theoretical framework for analysis is presented.

## **Defining religion**

Although religion is the object of intense study in many academic disciplines, including anthropology, psychology, sociology and political science, it is nearly impossible to come up with a single comprehensive definition that would suit all contexts. In the most general terms, religion refers to anything concerning the transcendent, supernatural and divine. As this thesis draws mostly from sociological and political science theories, however, it is mostly concerned with the social dimension of religion, characterised by phenomena, processes and organisations involving large groups of people, rather than these mystical features. Analysing religion as a social phenomenon allows it to be explained through scientific research into the natural and human world. The thesis focuses mainly on the social and public dimensions of religion, then, but references will also be made to all three of the most commonly distinguished dimensions of religion as: (1) a system of beliefs and values framed in a theory, doctrine or ideology usually expressed in the form of (2) practice and worship and pursued by (3) a community, movement or institution (Moyser 1991; Stark and Bainbridge 1987; Fox 2008). The first dimension is relevant to the Polish case study, as it concerns personal beliefs and values that prescribe the behavioural norms of individuals. On a global scale, Poland scores very low in terms of the importance of secular values, whereas the high importance of traditional (i.e. religious) values places the country in the same group as many Asian and African countries (Inglehart 2010). Almost 97% of Poles say they believe in God, and almost 95% describe themselves as religious, making Poland one of the most religious countries in Europe (RAS 2010).

The second dimension of religion, referring to religious practice and worship, is equally important in this thesis, particularly in terms of the religiosity of the Poles, which has frequently been described as ‘belonging without believing’ (Borowik 2010). This means that, although an overwhelming majority of Poles describe themselves as Roman Catholic and regularly participate in religious events and rituals, the level of personal involvement does not translate into following the precepts of the Catholic Church. Patterns of religious practice and worship, particularly within the dominant Roman Catholic community, are highly visible and important for Poland’s social life: three-quarters of Poles attend religious services at least once a month, and 40% regularly attend Sunday Mass. As many as 90% of Poles pray regularly, 70% doing so at least once a week. It must be noted that church attendance has fallen regularly since the late 1980s—in the case of those attending church services weekly, it dropped from almost 60% to just over 40% in three decades (Przeciszewski 2009). Moreover, despite the high numbers of those attending religious services and praying, only 46% of Polish Catholics believe the Church can offer answers to social problems (RAS 2010). Statistics differ greatly by age group, showing that young people in Poland are much less likely to attend church services and pray (Borowik 2008). Baniak’s (2008) research on religious practices and religious holidays has also shown that, paradoxically, the strong religiosity of Poles is now largely ‘secular’, and many holidays and religious rituals are now devoid of religious content and are merely secular in character. A good example of this may be the celebrations of the first Communion—an important rite of passage in the Catholic Church, whereby young people aged five to seven accept their first Holy Communion during a special Sunday service. In today’s Poland it is largely seen as an occasion for a family gathering and buying expensive, flashy gifts for the young people involved, with little or no reflection on the religious character of the event (Baniak 2011).

The last dimension of religion that will be addressed refers to the communal and institutional levels of religious life. In this case, the specificity of Poland’s dominant religion is of crucial importance. Roman Catholicism, professed by over 90% of Poles, is one of the most

highly organised and hierarchical religious denominations in the world. It is also the biggest actor in Poland's religious life; the Polish Roman Catholic Church (PRCC) is one of the more conservative and highly clericalised branches of the global Catholic communion. The clericalism of the Polish Church means that the institution is central to the life of the community, and the clergy and other Church officials are much more important than lay Catholics in decision-making and managing the everyday functioning of the Church (Makowski 2000). It must be noted that not only is the PRCC the largest religious institution, but it is also one of the most important social and economic institutions, and the biggest private landowner in Poland (Gowin 1999).

Most of the references and case-study materials presented in chapters 3 to 5 pertain to the PRCC and Roman Catholicism in general. This includes Catholic media, organisations and institutions drawing from the teachings of the Church, as well as individuals and informal groups declaring their allegiance to it. This is not a result of a deliberately selective choice of research material, but a consequence of the dominant place Catholicism and the PRCC play in both Poland's history and its contemporary reality. What is more, since the PRCC is part of the global Catholic community, the activities undertaken by the Holy See and the policies devised by the Vatican have important consequences for the Polish Church. The internal dynamics of the Catholic Church and the relationship between the Vatican and the Polish Church are not within the scope of this thesis, and will not be explored in any depth; they will be referred to only insofar as they are relevant to the place of religion in Poland's public life. In this context, the figure of John Paul II and his papacy's influence on both the democratic transformation and the post-1989 changes in the Polish Church are of particular relevance (see chapters 3 and 4).

It must also be noted that many actors in Poland's public life use the term 'religion' and 'Catholicism'/'Church'/'PRCC' interchangeably and instrumentally. Their usage of the terms is not always compatible with the academic notions of 'religion' and 'Church'. This is for a number of reasons. The PRCC often uses the term 'religion' instead of 'Catholicism' when it attempts

to portray itself as merely one of religious groups or denominations, and when referring to matters that may affect all religions (see abortion debate in Chapter 4). In a similar fashion, some politicians use the word ‘Catholicism’ or ‘Church’ when referring to religion, thus suggesting, explicitly or implicitly, that Catholicism and PRCC are the main, or only religious denomination in Poland that is worthy of public mention as a ‘national’ religion (see Chapter 5).

## **Defining politics**

In the simplest terms, politics refers to all relationships and activities of authority and power. In the study of political science, the term is most often used in the context of state and government. Moyser (1991) defines it as a process of collective decision-making, ‘whereby a group of people whose opinions or interests are initially divergent reach collective decisions which are generally regarded as binding on the group and enforced as common policy’ (Moyser 1991:3).

Both key elements of Moyser’s definition—collective decision-making and common policy—are essential to this thesis. The collective character of politics is of central significance here. Decisions are made within large groups inhabiting a given territory. Decision-making structures and the definition of territorial boundaries combine in the formation of a state, the basic unit within which political decisions are made. Currently, most competences and power lie with nation states, usually defined as geopolitical units inhabited by ethnic or cultural groups sharing a common history. Collective decision-making can take different forms, varying from peaceful ones, such as elections and referenda, to direct participation through coercion, mass violence, authoritarian rule or war. As this thesis is mostly concerned with post-1989 Poland, most attention will be paid to the current political regime—parliamentary democracy—and the political institutions and processes built after the collapse of communism. This period in Poland’s political life was marked, rather uniquely in contemporary Europe, by significant

temporary weakening and deep reform of state institutions (1989-1993) as well as a continuous close relationship between Church and state both in decision- and policy-making.

### **Liberal democracy, democratisation, post-communism**

Liberal democracy has been the desired form of polity for subsequent Polish governments since the collapse of the Polish communist state in 1989 (Bunce 1990). The transition process was based on two interlinked developments: democratisation and the establishment of a liberal-democratic political order. These two processes have had profound implications for shaping the country's political system and the relationship between religion and polity.

Liberal democracy is a form of indirect, representative democratic rule characterised by free and fair elections, involving universal voting rights combined with constitutional government and the protection of individual rights (Riley 2007). The primary component of a liberal democracy is that government is elected. In liberal democracies, elections should fulfil three basic criteria: they should be free, fair and competitive. This means that in a liberal, democratic state all citizens should have the right to vote, run for public office and enjoy freedom of speech and assembly, as well as enjoy a just election process and freedom of media covering all aspects of social life.

The liberal character of this type of polity also calls for the protection of individual rights, including the right of citizens to be protected from the state, the right of the majority to decide the outcome of democratic elections and the right of minorities to be protected from discrimination and persecution. One of the most important premises of liberalism involves deriving social choices from individual choices; this entails a strong insistence on the rights of the individual and protection from state intervention, particularly in the private sphere (Levine 1978).

Other key features of liberal democratic systems include institutionalised fragmentation, and a system of checks and balances assuring fairness and equality within the state apparatus, as well as the independence of organised groups and interests from government and the protection of human rights, including equality before the law and freedom of speech (Hague and Harrop 2007:9). Religious freedoms, including the right to practice, change, leave and join any religion are seen as an essential part of contemporary human rights (Davis 2006).

The last feature of liberal democratic systems, and one which is highly important to this thesis, refers to the core principle of democracy: political equality. It stems from the conviction that 'all human beings are of equal intrinsic worth, that no person is intrinsically superior to another, and that the good or interest of each person must be given equal consideration' (Dahl 2006:4). This term concerns the equal distribution of power and influence within a political system. Each individual member of the community should be given an equal say in the political processes and institutions of a liberal democracy.

Quite importantly, political equality assumes the active contribution of all citizens through political participation, which 'provides the mechanism by which citizens can communicate information about their interests, preferences, and needs and generate pressure to respond' (Verba 2001). The issue of active participation will be addressed further in this chapter with reference to civil society (see below). A broader approach to political equality assumes that it cannot be restricted to voting rights and the possibility of standing for public office. This approach calls for extending political equality to issues of social and economic equality and allowing access to means of mass communication (De Luca 2007).

The relationship between religion and all three pillars of the democratic polity (state, political society and civil society) in post-1989 Poland had important implications for all areas of liberal democracy-building, mentioned above. First of all, the Church was actively involved in the first democratic elections in 1989-1993 (see Chapter 4), thus influencing the construction of the first wave of representative democracy in Poland. Second, the Church actively lobbied

for the implementation of its key policy pledges in the area of education, morality and church-state relations, purportedly representing all Polish Catholics in its dealings with state institutions (government and parliament). The Church also acted as an important stakeholder in a number of policy-making debates, often side-lining or ignoring other social actors, including minority churches and secular groups. Furthermore, state and political institutions were undergoing significant reforms in the first years of transformation (1989-1993) and in many cases could not adequately respond to or counter PRCC's lobbying and campaigning efforts. In addition, the newly formed democratic institutions had not developed appropriate consultation mechanisms that would include smaller actors, which reinforced exclusion of smaller stakeholders in policy-making (see Chapter 4).

As mentioned previously, liberal democracies are the dominant system of government for most European countries. According to Freedom House, an American non-governmental organisation that publishes an annual global review of democratic freedoms, almost ninety countries around the world are governed by liberal democratic regimes, including the USA, Canada, all European Union member states, Australia and Japan. Other types of regime include illiberal democracies, such as Russia and Malaysia, which hold regular elections and safeguard certain individual liberties, but suffer from inadequate human rights protection and do not assure a free and fair electoral process (Freedom in the World 2009).

Central and Eastern European states formerly belonging to the Soviet bloc, including Poland, started pursuing democratic reforms in 1989 and have stayed on this path ever since, although the transformation in different countries and in varying aspects of social and political life have proceeded at different speeds.

Weffort (1989:329-330) argues that there are significant differences in democratic transformation between countries that have experienced a revolution, or had previously experienced democratic rule (or both), and those that have not. A brief period of democratic rule between the wars (1918-1939) and the peaceful revolution of 1989 placed Poland in a



favourable position to build a democratic order. Conversely, as Poland was subject to Soviet communist rule between 1944 and 1989, and communist rule fell rapidly and rather unexpectedly, the reform process initiated in 1989 has been long and complex.

The most important challenge for the political order in Poland was its democratisation, as the communist system was thoroughly undemocratic, and one-party rule had dominated the public life of the country for almost half a century before the reform. The democratisation process, initiated with the first free elections in June 1989, had profound implications for the current shape of Poland's political landscape. According to Przeworski (1991), every democratisation process consists of three main stages: breakdown of the old regime, democratic transition and democratic consolidation. All three stages can be identified in Poland's post-1989 transformation. The PRCC played a unique and very active role in the first two stages of the democratisation process. It was an official partner in talks with the government and opposition groups during the talks on the handover of power from communists to opposition in late 1980s (see Chapter 3). The Church also played an active part in shaping the relations between different state institutions, such as president, government and parliament, in the first period of the democratic transition (1989-1993).

The first stage of the democratisation process in Poland—the collapse of the communist regime—is relatively easy to place in time, and can be narrowed down to a few months in 1989, between the first 'Round Table' talks (involving the communist government and its opposition) in February—when the communist party agreed to allow other parties to run in parliamentary elections—and the first democratic elections themselves, which took place in June of the same year (Wiatr 1997). Before and during the 'Round Table' talks, the Church acted as a broker between Solidarity and the Polish United Workers' Party (see Chapter 3). Once the communist party allowed for political pluralism, and the first democratically elected parliament took office, the scene was set for the second phase of the democratisation process.

The democratic transition stage usually involves the construction of new liberal-democratic structures and processes—mainly in government, but also in wider political terms and within civil society. Linz and Stepan list four basic requirements for the democratic transition to be complete: sufficient agreement about procedures for holding democratic elections, a government directly elected in a free popular vote, authority of the government to formulate public policy and the concentration of power within three branches of the state (executive, legislative and judiciary) (Linz and Stepan 1996:3-4). The transition period is not as easy to distinguish as the first phase, and often overlaps both the first and the third stages. In the case of Poland, the transition period can be considered complete as of 1992, when both the president and a fully democratic parliament were elected and a new (albeit temporary) constitution was set in place. Here again, the Church played an active role in both the electoral process and policy-making (see Chapter 4).

It could be argued that the last of Linz and Stepan's conditions, the concentration of power, was not fully met, as the military was still in the process of reforming and switching to civilian control and Soviet troops were still stationed in the country, but this is not quite right: political power was now concentrated almost totally in the hands of the parliament and the newly elected president, Lech Wałęsa. When it came to agreement on democratic procedures and elections, the balance of power was firmly in place, but it did not translate into universal acceptance for liberal democracy within Polish society. On the one hand, overall support for the post-1989 transformation had a strong (over 50%) base throughout the 1990s, and most Poles accepted democracy as a permanent feature of the political system (Strzeszewski and Zagórski 2000). On the other hand, Poles remained critical of the quality and future of Polish democracy; between 1991 and 2001, 37%-63% were dissatisfied with the course of democratic transformation and only 20%-49% were satisfied with it (Opinie 2008). These ambivalent attitudes towards democracy were a good illustration of the third, most contentious and least defined phase of democratisation outlined by Przeworski.

According to Przeworski, democratic consolidation can only be considered complete once the new liberal-democratic structures and processes become so integrated both in the political system and in the consciousness of the elites and the general population that removing them is unconceivable. Linz and Stepan (1996:6) add that furthermore, all governmental and non-governmental forces need to agree that political conflict can be resolved within the legal and institutional framework of the new regime.

Consequently, the *completeness* of democratic consolidation in Poland remains the subject of debate. As Freedom House's recent reports suggest, a number of post-communist CEE states (particularly those that joined the European Union between 2004 and 2007) can now be considered liberal democracies, but they fail to match their Western neighbours in terms of the quality and sustainability of their democratic institutions and procedures. Although significant differences also exist between Western liberal democracies, these democracies have more in common in with each other than with CEE states. Some of the differences are due to the different historical experiences of those countries in developing a liberal democratic order; others are attributable to more contemporary phenomena, such as the behaviour of political groups and organisations. In the case of Poland, most of the differences seem to be a consequence of the relatively short transformation period, as well as certain emergent features of Poland's democratisation process following the collapse of communism. A number of authors (Sakwa 1999; Lanczi 2007) argue that democratisation processes in CEE states are mostly conditioned by the fact that countries like Poland had a common point of departure for their democratisation, notably Soviet-enforced communism. Sakwa (1999) argues that the specific nature of post-communist transformation changes the course of the democratisation process. Post-communism is a relatively new term in political science, as it only appeared after the unexpected (at least to political scientists) collapse of the Soviet bloc that started in 1989 and finished in 1991. Sakwa (1999:3) asserts that post-communism refers to the political, social, economic and cultural reality of those Central and Eastern European states that were part of

the Soviet bloc until the late 1980s and early 1990s. Sakwa further claims that post-communism is a negative concept, as it 'defines the present in terms of its past'. Lanczi (2007:69) takes a similar view, noting that for most writers on post-communism, it is considered a universally negative notion, assuming that for post-communist countries it equates to a healing process: 'the sick person on the way to recovery'.

Lanczi's view was widely adopted by most political and social groups in post-1989 Poland. Since the first years of rapid transformation, however, new rifts have arisen, and there is now much disagreement about the direction and character of reforms. Lanczi (2007) divides approaches to post-communism into two major categories: the internalist/self-understanding view and the externalist/progressive view. The latter stresses the linear character of post-communist reforms and the imminent modernisation of post-communist societies. It focuses particularly on the ways that CEE states catch up with the West by copying their institutional solutions and procedures; it also underlines the historical necessity of the transformation. The progressive category is particularly relevant in relation to the position of the Church and other social actors in post-communist Poland towards modernisation and reforms in the newly democratised society (see Chapter 4). The linear and progressive character of the democratic transformation was subject to intense debate both within politics and in wider society. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, liberal democracy, although based on institutions and procedures, also represents a certain type of political culture. Although the Freedom House 'Nations in Transit' report shows that post-communist CEE states have adopted democratic rules, built democratic institutions and followed certain democratic standards over the last 20 years, they are still lagging behind their Western European neighbours in terms of democratic culture. Certain indicators within the 'Nations in Transit' report confirm that the changes which have occurred between 1989 and 2010 are not universally linear or progressive in character. On the Freedom House scale, one stands for a fully developed/democratic civil society, and seven equals the worst/non-democratic score. In Poland the civil society index has actually gone up

from 1.25 in 2005 to 1.5 in 2009. The 2009 Freedom House report stated that ‘Poland’s civil society rating worsens (...) due to the decline in the vibrancy of the civil society and slight reductions of the state’s funding of NGOs caused by the economic crisis’. The National Democratic Governance indicator stood at 2.50 in 2005 and at 2.75 in 2010—explained by the *‘tendency to concentrate power in the executive branch, which is dominating the political process’* (Freedom House 2011).

Lanczi (2007) suggests that, despite a long period of transformation, CEE states are still stuck in a post-communist reality essentially different from Western European political orders, and that this situation will continue. The main particularities of the post-communist world that hamper the establishment of a democratic culture and preserve the post-communist order are lack of respect for political pluralism, the dominant role of the state and the level of corruption in public life. Inglehart (2010) adds that, because of the low score on the scale of survival values vs. self-expression values,<sup>7</sup> which has not changed much since 1990, Polish society is not well-disposed to the flourishing of a consolidated (completely developed) democracy.

The issue of a lack of support for political pluralism, often expressed in terms of moral superiority and inferiority, is linked to political culture and competition between political parties and factions (see below for more details on political actors and political society). Even though political equality is widely perceived to be a founding principle of liberal democracies, political groups and parties in Poland do not see their rivals as equals. The rifts in Polish politics are growing—in the early 1990s they included the post-Solidarity and post-communist party lines (during the 1993, 1997 and 2001 parliamentary elections) (Szczerbiak 1998), only then to move to a conflict between a strong welfare state versus a more liberal and civic version during the

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<sup>7</sup> One of the two major dimensions of cross-cultural variation in the world (the second one being traditional vs. secular values) according to a World Value Survey. Survival values refer to physical and economic security of societies, whereas self-expression values refer to equality, participation in democratic life and environmental protection (see Inglehart and Welzel 2010).

2005 and 2007 election campaigns. Despite the changing focus of the political clashes, the relations between political opponents are still antagonistic in nature, and religious actors, such as the PRCC, are often in the eye of the storm (see Chapter 5). Subsequent electoral campaigns confirm that there is no evidence of these antagonistic processes declining. On the contrary, the two recent parliamentary elections of 2005 and 2007 were characterised by an intense ideological debate between the two main contenders and their allies (including the PRCC on the side of Law and Justice and other right-wing parties), which was filled with mutual accusations of a serious character. This has been a permanent feature of all electoral campaigns since 1989, but the process has intensified and deepened the inter-party divide to such an extent that even parties on the same side of the political scene (right or left) fail to agree on basic policy issues. There is a tendency to move away from policy issues and party manifestos towards larger scale, unifying concepts and slogans (e.g. Law and Justice's Catholic-based 'Fourth Republic'—see Chapter 5) that exacerbate the political struggle and mostly target political opponents (Szczzerbiak 2008; Guerra and Bil 2009). What is more, despite a long period of democratic transformation, the Polish state still has not developed appropriate consultation mechanisms that would include all relevant stakeholders. Makowski (2010:126) contends that 20 years after the first democratic elections, Polish government still relies on 'traditional' social partners such as trade unions, employers and PRCC, significantly weakening the democratic legitimacy of many policy-making processes.

It must be noted that most of the problems—and in particular most of the controversies—surrounding the Polish post-communist transformation pertain to political processes and institutions (and to some extent the social aspects of reforms) rather than to the economics of the transformation, which was initially one of the biggest challenges. Today's Poland enjoys a liberal, free-market economy that has largely surpassed the communist, centralised socialist model. Poland joined the European Union and World Trade Organisation, thereby entering a globalised economy and completely reorienting its own economic policy both internally and

externally. The free-market economy has produced high growth rates for over two decades, and the largest part of the Gross Domestic Product is now produced by private enterprise—a total reversal of the communist economic model. Household incomes have more than doubled in the last two decades, and the economy is now amongst Europe’s most stable (Rapacki 2008). The main challenges of Polish post-communist transformation pertain to its political and social institutions, notably the so-called polity triangle: state, political society and civil society. It is the relations between the three of them, and the role of religious actors, notably the Polish Roman Catholic Church, that shape the place and role of religion in Polish public life.

### **The polity: state, political society, civil society**

Stepan (1988:5) suggests that ‘for a modern polity in the midst of a democratisation effort, it is conceptually and politically useful to distinguish three important arenas of the polity: civil society, political society, and the state’. In post-1989 Poland, the relevance of this distinction is underlined by the legacy of its communist past. The Marxist-Leninist Soviet rule, dominant in the political life of the country between 1944 and 1989, effectively merged the all-encompassing state apparatus with political and civil society. The socialist state was much larger than today’s liberal democratic state. It was the biggest employer and the provider of the most services and, in the face of a merger with political society (see below) and a practically non-existent civil society, it enjoyed unchallenged authority. Political society under Soviet communism was limited to a party apparatus that was largely equivalent to the state’s structures and the dominance of a single party. The Polish United Workers’ Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, PZPR) was the main source of power during the entire communist period. The function of the two minor, non-communist parties was limited to serving as PZPR’s reach-out institutions to certain

groups within society (small businesses and farmers). The emergence of independent political and civil societies was, therefore, one of the main challenges to Poland's transition.

The role of civil society was reduced to near non-existence during the early communist period. During the most restrictive Stalinist era, almost all forms of civic activity were suppressed by the state and the Party. Later on, a certain level of non-Party activity was allowed, particularly during the last decades of communist rule, but there was still little scope for an independent civil society. Even during the glory days of Solidarity, supported by the Catholic Church in the 1980s, civil society organisations were largely restricted or controlled by the state (see Chapter 3). Analysing the course of secularisation processes in contemporary Poland requires an insight into the developments within all three spheres.

### *State*

Stepan defines a state as 'something more than government'—it is 'the continuous administrative, legal, bureaucratic and coercive system that attempts not only to manage the state apparatus but to structure relations between civil and public power and to structure many crucial relationships within civil and political society' (Stepan 1988:4). The dominant model of state institutions, devised by Montesquieu, divides them into three principal branches: executive, legislative and judiciary. Moyser (1991:7) adds the administrative and bureaucratic apparatus (civil service) to this list as a separate category, but linked together with the law-enforcement arms of the state, such as the police, army and secret services. The state is the most clear-cut part of the tripartite division presented above, and remains relatively easy to define in terms of its constituent parts and processes. It interacts with both political society and civil society in a number of ways, positioned at the apex of this triangle as the main source of political power. In contemporary Poland, the state and its apparatus are easy to distinguish from other areas of the polity in terms of structures and internal order. However, the Polish state is subject to much criticism for its lack of transparency and efficiency in delivering policy, as well as for the imbalance in relations



within political society (O'Dwyer 2004). Furthermore, the Polish state was subject to major reforms as a result of the collapse of the communist system and throughout the transformation process. The first months of transformation (1989-1993) and the process of abolishing five critical power monopolies of the communist state, notably administrative, financial and in property matters (Regulska 2009:538), were particularly turbulent and allowed non-state actors, including the Church, to gain an important foothold in state matters.

### *Political society*

The second pillar of a modern democratic polity, political society, is an area of the polity that constantly 'surrounds' the state and contests for political power through democratic elections, lobbying and all other forms at its disposal. Power and authority over the state and its population are the ultimate goals of political society, whatever the methods used. They do not always have to lead to the direct participation of political society's actors in state structures. Sometimes, indirect forms of influence, pressure and control are preferred. Main actors of political societies in modern democratic states include political parties, groups, leaders and alliances between parties. The most important process underpinning political society is the electoral process: deciding who will enter the state apparatus and on what terms; this is of crucial importance in young democracies, particularly those in a state of transition, such as post-1989 Poland, as the rules and course of elections are constantly being re-evaluated and are subject to change, unlike in established democracies (Linz and Stepan 1996).

According to Hyden, Court and Mease (2003), the five most important features of any political society are: representation, competitiveness, efficiency of aggregation, influence of legislature and accountability. All of the five features listed will be assessed in the study of the Polish case (particularly in chapters 4 and 5) in conjunction with the analysis of the relationship between religion and politics with regard to the secularisation process. In particular, issues of representation of political society at large and the place of religious pressure groups within it,

and the accountability of officials that pursue the PRCC's agenda, will be relevant to understanding the relationship between politics and religion. The Church's activities in post-communist Poland are directly relevant to all five features of political society. Quite importantly, PRCC remained a stable institution throughout the communist and post-communist era, whereas the Polish political scene changed completely in 1989, and remained volatile throughout the first decades of the transformation process (see chapters 4 and 5). Many political parties and groups in Poland, whether declared right- or left-wing (the divisions along traditional right-left lines are not easy to pin down) have been known to co-operate actively with the PRCC on a number of issues in post-communist Poland, thus making the Church an important influence with regards to representation and aggregation within political society. Furthermore, PRCC had an important role to play in the legislative processes, notably in 1989-1993 (see Chapter 4).

#### *Civil society and the public sphere*

Whereas the first two pillars of a democratic polity (state and political society) are intrinsically linked, and their boundaries, although hotly debated, are clearly marked, the concept of civil society is subject to much discussion. Both its definition and place in the polity triangle (state, political society, civil society) remain contentious, particularly in the context of democratic transformation.

In their classic work on civil society and political theory, Cohen and Arato (1992:ix) define civil society as 'a sphere of social interaction between economy and state, composed above all of the intimate sphere (especially the family), the sphere of associations (especially voluntary associations), social movements, and forms of public communication'. Douglass and Friedmann (1998:1) list the constituent elements of civil society rather similarly, seeing it as a 'society of households, family networks, civic and religious organisations and communities that are bound to each other primarily by shared histories, collective memories and cultural norms of reciprocity'. Both definitions show that civil society can be interpreted negatively (i.e. through

what it is not): there are clear references to its being separate from the state, political society and economic realms. Civil society should be distinguished from the totality of political organisations, state apparatus and wider political bodies (such as parliaments), and from the economic society composed of organisations involved in production, services and distribution. It also needs to be distinguished from the totality of sociocultural life. Civil society refers to structures of socialisation, association and communication between individuals and groups, but only when they are institutionalised or in the process of institutionalisation. It does not refer to all forms of social life, even if those forms are voluntary (and particularly if they are informal and not organised).

The notion of independence from the state and the concept of political and economic realms as defining features of civil society are underlined in theories of democratisation. Civil society is commonly seen as a critical element of democratic regimes and an important contributing factor in democratisation processes (Douglass and Friedmann 1998; Herbert 2003). In view of the importance of active citizenship and political equality in democratic regimes, civil society is essential to ensure the balance between state and society (Hefner 2002). Voluntary organisations and other forms of social activity, protected by a set of rights, separate the private or family sphere from the space occupied by state institutions, thus ensuring the smooth functioning of democratic states. It is important that the division between civil society and the economy/state is not that of opposition. Civil society is a dimension of society expressed through conscious association-building and associational life, and, as such, although it can gain influence over political-administrative and economic processes, there is no inherent conflict with them (Cohen and Arato 1992:x).

All three pillars of the democratic polity are constantly subject to change and renegotiation. Even though liberal democracy favours a division between all three, there is a certain level of flexibility in the relationship between them; furthermore, the ongoing democratisation process blurs the distinction between the three pillars. As explained above, the

Marxist-Leninist ideology that dominated in Poland between 1944 and 1989 favoured a forced merger of all three structures under the banner of proletarian communism. There were no totally independent civil society organisations in communist Poland. Virtually all associations, trade unions and other non-state institutions were either controlled or incorporated into the state apparatus.

Civil society is often placed somewhere in the middle between state and political society. Not only does it mediate between the state and political society, but the origins of the latter can be traced back to civil society. The mediating role of civil society in a democratic polity lies in finding a middle ground between two phenomena: overpoliticisation and depoliticisation. The first term describes a situation where the political is assigned to the state (like in communist Poland); the second describes the opposite, where all dimensions of civil society are political. And so in post-communist Poland civil society had to create a bridge between these two opposing forces.

The legacy of the communist past meant that Poland's emerging civil society had to fight the legacy of massive overpoliticisation. Huntington (1968) states that in a situation where the state is weak (not in terms of its power structures, but in its authority within society), and where no mediation channels between social groups exist, politicisation of all social institutions is unavoidable: a process called praetorianism. Both of these conditions—a weak state and a lack of mediation channels—were prevalent in communist Poland's politics, particularly in the early Stalinist period, when the communist regime was seen as usurper, and when opposition groups and parties still existed. The forced closure of non-communist political parties and civil society groups and the persecution of religious organisations—mainly the PRCC—commenced after the war and lasted until the early 1950s, which led to a sharp conflict between social groups. Ramet (1995) confirms that political institutions in early communist Poland were inefficient and only superficially established, which fostered the development of a praetorian syndrome. These failures, alongside the communist party's weakness and corruption, and the inconsistent

application and execution of laws, meant that social groups began to oppose each other. This process continued outside widely accepted channels for mediation, and political power itself became fragmented. Organised institutions such as the military, students, religious organisations and labour unions started to behave in a more politicised way.

Huntington also suggests that praetorianism is a result of a lag in the development of political institutions in relation to social and economic development, bringing about political mobilisation without political integration—a process that could be observed in Poland from the 1960s onwards (see Chapter 3). Political and social actors became mobilised in the absence of fully functional political institutions. This lack of institutions meant that the actors' demands could not be articulated and aggregated, which led to their radicalisation. The rise of the Solidarity movement can thus be explained in terms of the growing praetorianism of Polish society. In the absence of mediation mechanisms, social and political forces confronted each other, which led to a state of total conflict throughout 1980s Poland. Even the mass character of the Solidarity movement, and its role in the fall of communism as the largest civil society movement in the communist bloc, could not prevent significant internal problems in terms of self-definition as a civil society and political organisation (Ost 1991). In this context, the PRCC was a significant praetorian institution thorough the communist period. This was particularly relevant in the case of symbolic praetorianism, namely becoming a symbolic representative of the nation vis-à-vis the communist state and claiming moral authority over the nation (see Chapter 3). The other tier of the PRCC's praetorian function, institutional praetorianism, was less pronounced as the Church never developed fully as part of political institutional structure of the communist (and then democratic state), only temporarily becoming a semi-formal mediating institution in late 1980s and early 1990s (see chapters 3 and 4).

And all of these processes contributed to the weakness of civil society on the eve of Poland's transformation, and to further problems with its development throughout the first decades of transformation. As the Freedom House 'Nations in Transit' reports show (see

above), strengthening civil society was, therefore, a major challenge to successful democratic consolidation in Poland. This was particularly relevant given that a vibrant civil society is often promoted as being a prerequisite for a genuine liberal democracy if it is to bring the modern state under societal control. Edwards (2003:4-45) argues that, although the basic notion of civil society pertains to the totality of voluntary associations, which are seemingly neutral from the point of view of democratic states, there are two important uses of the term that make it essential for the development of liberal democracies. The first refers to the use of 'civil society' as a value, reflecting the advantages of cooperation. For the second, Edwards equates 'civil society' with a 'democratic ecosystem', which he defines as a public sphere in which engagement with the issues concerning society takes place. The two dimensions presented by Edwards underline the importance of civil society as a key pillar of the polity in liberal democracies—and the weakest pillar of the polity in post-communist Poland.

Maintaining the balance between the state and other parts of society is a crucial task for civil society, then, but it can only be achieved if a number of conditions are met. Kasfir (1998:2-5) suggests conditions that allow a functioning civil society to exist in a democratic state. First of all, in a functioning liberal democracy, civil society organisations may influence politics (see below), but they should not become political actors themselves, to avoid civil society becoming political society. Following on from that, for the sake of their credibility and integrity, civil society organisations should respect the rules they would like to enforce on the state, and they may not pursue an anti-democratic agenda. Finally, in order to be efficient, they should also be willing and able to confront the state on the issues they find important. Organisations that follow these rules, Kasfir contends, become 'the core of civil society'. Those that do not 'may be part of the society at large', but are not part of civil society as such.

To address the main concern of this thesis, then: in post-1989 Poland, the PRCC's activities suggest that the Church is not (or was not) confined by the classic boundaries of civil society. Even though the PRCC claims allegiance to democracy, it often pursues an anti-

democratic agenda. The case of anti-abortion legislation (see Chapter 4), where the Church reserved the right to influence government policy without regard for other civil society actors, or that of the re-introduction of religious education into public schools (see Chapter 4) were vivid examples of the Church's disregard for democratic principles. What is more, the Church is an independent institution, totally exempt from state control—way beyond other civil society organisations (e.g. in terms of taxation)—making it totally unaccountable to society and external actors. On the other hand, the Church frequently requires the state to account for its actions, particularly in the policy areas the PRCC is interested in, i.e. education, sexuality and morality (see Chapter 5). This kind of behaviour reinforces an imbalance between a non-transparent civil society organisation (i.e. the PRCC) and a transparent state.

Although numerous sources confirm that Poland now enjoys a vibrant civil society, that very civil society nevertheless remains one of the weakest pillars of the newly built liberal democratic polity. In the Freedom House reports, it is noted that civil society growth dynamics slowed down after the first years of transformation, and recent years have resulted in the downgrading of civil society rankings (*Nations in Transit* 2010). Regular sociological surveys focusing on civil society in Poland (CBOS 2004, 2008) confirm this phenomenon. Even though Poles show more confidence in civil society and trust each other more, this has not translated into increased activity in civil society organisations.

As this thesis is mostly concerned with public life and the public dimension of religion, it engages with the public dimension of civil society. The latter is composed of the totality of voluntary associations (including religious ones) that can be analysed internally as organisations and institutions, but which can also be viewed through the lens of their public activity. One of the key links between civil society and the other pillars of democratic polity relates to the ability of civil society to influence public life. The activities of civic associations and other institutions of civil society generate opinions and channel influence through the democratic discussion process in the public sphere. The term 'public' is very broad; it can refer to things accessible to

everyone and of concern to everyone, as well as pertain to the common good or a shared interest, or simply to state-related activities. In social sciences, the term is most commonly applied in three contexts:

- The people—the general public as presented in democratic theory, an electorate entitled to elect the government, and the bearer of public opinion (...);
- Statistics—the aggregate of individual views, calculated on the basis of survey data;
- An active public—the result of people getting together to discuss or act in a certain way.

(Fraser 1990:70-71)

The first and third meanings are most relevant to the study of a modern democratic polity, particularly in the context of relations between religion and politics. Liberal democracies rely on an active general public producing a composite opinion of its members and making informed choices derived from public debate. A properly functioning public sphere is a place in which political participation is enacted through dialogue, and where citizens debate issues of common concern, and it is fundamental to democratisation processes within liberal democracies.

According to Habermas (1989), the modern public sphere emerged alongside liberal democracies in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In his *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas traces the history of this phenomenon to the bourgeois public sphere that emerged in Western Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Within a relatively short period of time—a few generations—growing numbers of middle-class citizens began to engage in arguments over key issues of mutual interest. Debates were pursued initially in coffee shops and dining clubs, and through political pamphlets that grew ever more popular throughout the period (Herbert 2003:96). By engaging in this new form of debate, citizens created a public domain for new ideas independent of both state and individual self-interest. This newly created public domain served as a mediatory



platform between the public and private spheres, and between society and the state, 'by holding the state accountable to "society" by "publicity"' (Fraser 1990:58). The key processes that facilitated the creation of this bourgeois public realm included social differentiation and the separation of political authority from everyday life. Both processes are equally essential for democratisation. Additionally, the privatisation of self and subjectivity, and the division between private and public, contributed to the strengthening of the public domain.

Habermas further argues that the bourgeois public sphere fostered critical rationality and active involvement in public life. These features make it relevant to contemporary concepts of civil society and to active participation. In the 1964 'Encyclopedia Article' on the public sphere, Habermas defines it as a 'realm of social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed' and where 'access is guaranteed to all citizens' (Habermas 1974:49). According to the author, access to information is instrumental in gaining institutional influence over the government, through law-making bodies. Control over the state apparatus is thus another feature of the public sphere that overlaps with what civil society is expected to achieve in modern liberal democracies.

Although his approach is largely historical and normative, certain elements of the Habermasian vision remain relevant today. Critics of Habermas point to the fact that his concept of the public sphere suffers from a narrow focus (e.g. excluding women and the lower classes), and idealises rational discussion in the 'golden era' of communication (Asen 1999:119-123). Contemporary democracies and their civil societies actually tend to be inclusive and open to all social classes and groups. And Habermas (1989) himself agreed that the 'old' public sphere declined with the social and economic changes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Changes in communication media, such as print, radio and TV, all worked against the milieu of reasoned debate that he believed once dominated the bourgeois public arena. And it is this recognition that makes Habermas's ideas relevant.

This concerns the role of the media in the public realm and its influence on public life, factors which are essential for understanding a modern democratic polity. Garnham (2000:130) argues that much of today's social interaction takes place in the media, a concern reflected by Habermas. Habermas suggests that today's politics is increasingly dominated by PR and marketing techniques, and more and more emphasis is put on appearance and good impressions, a phenomenon Habermas calls 'refeudalisation' (1989:158). As part of this process, Habermas mentions powerful private corporations, which have started to control and manipulate the media as well as the state. This process was complemented by the fact that, particularly after 1945, the state began to play a more fundamental role in private life, eroding the difference between state and civil society and the public and private spheres.

All of the above, according to Habermas, have contributed to the decline of democratic participation and traditional forms of mediation between the general public and government, such as trades unions and political parties. Debates on fundamental issues have shifted from items crucial for citizens to politics focused on attracting the electorate, which in turn causes public and political life to degenerate. Habermas's theory confirms a strong link between civil society and the public sphere. Herbert (2003:75) suggests that 'civil society organisations channel private opinion into the public sphere but they do not constitute the latter'.

The PRCC can be classified as a manipulator of both media and state, as described by Habermas. Although not a private corporation, the PRCC remains a non-state, undemocratic entity operating independently. Throughout the first twenty years of democratic transformation, the Church has demonstrated its influence on both media and the two polity pillars (state and political society). As such, the PRCC has tended to erode the differences between state and civil society, and between civil society and the public sphere. The Church, in co-operation with politicians and state institutions, maintains control over many aspects of government policy, independently of the citizens' views. Although contemporary Poland is classified as a modern

secular democracy, the relationship between religion and the three pillars of the polity contains elements characteristic of confessional states, as we shall see.

## **Religion and the polity**

The links between religion and the newly constructed democratic polity in post-1989 Poland can be explored from two directions: the influence of the three pillars of democratic polity on religion, and the influence of religion on democratic polity. This thesis will mostly be concerned with the influence of religion on the state, political society and civil society, but some analysis of the political influence on religion will be required.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, religion will be approached in its three dimensions (as a value system, religious practice and community/institution), but another important distinction needs to be made. In all three dimensions, religion can be analysed at the individual as well as group level. This thesis is mostly concerned with the public dimension of religion. Although religion on an individual level is significant, mainly because of its influence on individual value systems and behaviour (Ramet 1995:64), the principal focus of this thesis will be on group religiosity and religious organisations, ‘whose claims and pretention are *always* to some degree political’ (Haynes 1998:5, emphasis in the original).

The distinct character of religion and politics, and the increasing division into public and private dimensions of religion, are features of modern times, particularly in Europe. The pre-modern relationship between religion and politics in Europe was much closer than in the contemporary model.

Although the processes of modernisation and secularisation have led to the realms of religion and politics becoming largely separate, the historical legacy of the alliance between religion and the state is still visible across Europe and the wider world. This legacy makes

church-state relations central to that between religion and politics. Medhurst (1981:46) proposes a contemporary typology of this context based on two main criteria:

- The relationship of rulers with religious communities;
- The relationship of religious communities with the polity.

Medhurst’s then distinguishes between four types of church-state regimes: the integrated religio-political system, the confessional polity, the religiously neutral polity and the anti-religious polity (1981:116–see Table 5). The proposed typology is evolutionary in character, as, according to Medhurst, states usually move from type to type in a linear fashion (although the process is sometimes reversed), rather than shifting from one type to another (more distant) one.

**Table 5: Typology of church-state relations (Medhurst 1981)**

	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4
<b>Relationships of Rulers with Religious Communities</b>	The Integrated ‘Religio-Political System’	The Confessional Polity (or State)	The Religiously Neutral Polity (or State)	The Anti-Religious Polity (or State)
<b>Relationships of Religious Communities with the Polity</b>	The Integrated ‘Religio-Political System’	Confessional Politics	Pluralistic Politics	Sectarianism

Types 2 and 3 are the most relevant to post-1989 Poland, which fits somewhere between those two models. Type 2 polity is characterised by a confessional state and confessional politics. According to Medhurst, the relations between Church and state take this shape when the dominant religio-political system (Type 1) gives way to more religious and ideological pluralism—thus underlining the linear character of changes in the relationship between state and Church. As far as the attitudes of religious communities and organisations are concerned, a Type 2 polity is characterised by actual ideological pluralism, which is regularly challenged by practitioners and leaders of the dominant religious tradition in order to organise the members of the majority religious community to deter perceived threats and defend the values and institutional interests of their faith (Medhurst 1981:123).

The second model of church-state relations relevant to the Polish case study is Medhurst's Type 3: a religiously neutral polity with pluralistic politics. According to Medhurst, a polity can be considered religiously neutral when religious and ideological pluralism have not only fully emerged, but have been accepted as legitimate by all the parties involved. This usually happens when confessional loyalties lose their salience to and relevance in the political domain as a result of at least one of three processes: a change in public policy, growing indifference towards religion and revised ideological and theological understanding (Medhurst 1981:123). In consequence, the increased competition between conflicting ideologies and groups associated with them is accepted as conducive to political stability and the functioning of the polity.

What is particularly important for a religiously neutral polity is for politics to be regarded as an autonomous or quasi-autonomous sphere of activity. This autonomy means that religious communities, organisations and leaders no longer enjoy privileged status and close relationships with political society, and so cease to act as a source of guidance. On the other hand, pluralistic politics in a Type 3 polity mean that religious communities experience limited involvement in politics. Members of religious communities may still perceive themselves as having the duty to influence public debate, but they also accept that, in order to achieve this, they may need to

forge alliances and co-operate with non-religious actors. Additionally, under the conditions of pluralistic politics, individual members of religious communities can disregard the guidance of their leaders in the sphere of politics and freely choose from a range of political options. This may threaten the identity of certain religious communities and decrease their capacity to contribute to political debates. Evidence from the first twenty years of post-communist politics in Poland shows that a large number of politicians feel obliged by the teachings and policies of their Church, often in opposition to their party allegiances (see chapters 4 and 5). Medhurst (1981:128) lists three types of responses of religious communities to pluralistic politics: (1) completely opting out from political life; (2) creating political parties or movements inspired by religious values, but not closely related to Church institutions or groups, and not acting as defenders of orthodoxy; or (3) acting as pressure groups and abandoning other forms of organisation of religious opinion in the political realm (the Anglo-Saxon model). This arrangement between religion and politics in a Type 3 polity is most coherent with the division into state, political society and civil society in a liberal democracy (as described above). Maduro (2002) remarks that the idea of the 'separation of Church and State' is a form of prerogative exercised by the state; the state also has the power to define what 'religion' is by granting religious legitimacy to social actors, including delegating powers and rights to churches and religious bodies. He further maintains that conflicts between the state and religious bodies can be analysed as 'struggles between partially different agencies for the monopoly to define what/who is "religious" and what/who is not' (Maduro 2002:602). The case of post-1989 Poland seems to contradict the primacy of state over religious institutions. The first years of Poland's democratic transformation were a time of intense co-operation and exchange of power and privilege between state and the Church. In the early 1990s, the PRCC often dictated state policy and legislation, sometimes with disregard for democratic procedure and in violation of the law. The Polish state still supports the Catholic Church, offering it more recognition than other religious communities. What is more, on several occasions (see chapters 4 and 5) the Church

granted itself the right to decide what was best for the state, and it was given an almost free hand in dictating legal and institutional solutions that suited its interests (Żakowski 2010), particularly at a time when weak state institutions could not respond accordingly (especially between 1989-1993) When it comes to the relationship of religion with the second pillar of democratic polity–political society–the imbalance of power is less prominent. Religious organisations and groups have numerous instruments at their disposal in order to achieve their goals in the public realm, and with reference to political society. As political society is much less bound by formal and institutional limitations than the state, the potential leverage of religion on political society is considerably higher. This is particularly important in cases of religions active in the public sphere in conditions of religious deprivatisation (see Chapter 2). Casanova (1994:218-219) lists a number of religious activities that take place at the political-society level in a religiously deprivatised context:

- Resisting the disestablishment and differentiation of the secular spheres;
- Mobilisations and countermobilisations of religious groups against other religions and against secularist movements and parties;
- Mobilisation in defence of religious freedoms;
- Demanding the rule of law and legal protection of rights;
- Protecting the mobilisation of civil society and defending the institutionalisation of democratic regimes.

Casanova's list confirms that religious actors can form complex relationships and exert influence on all levels of political society. The most common way of transmitting political opinion in liberal democracies is through political parties, and the relationship between religious groups and political parties is therefore crucial and based on a number of elements. Institutionalised religions and religious groups have the highest chance of influencing political

parties, as their institutionalisation facilitates mutual contact: Church officials in Poland often meet their 'opposite numbers' in state institutions (e.g. the Primate meets the Prime Minister). Politicians and party leaders also have religious attitudes and preferences that influence their political behaviour, so that manifestos and party policies can be affected by religious content. And religious organisations can apply sufficient pressure on their members to influence their voting behaviour, thus exercising direct control over political parties.

The interaction between religion and post-1989 Polish politics illustrates the potential of religious institutions to influence party politics very well. Although the PRCC officially proclaims its political neutrality, examples of its direct involvement in party politics are anything but rare. The most visible elements are public and private meetings between Church hierarchs and political party and government officials—particularly frequent during the first years of democratic governance (1989-1993; see Chapter 3). The PRCC regularly seeks to pursue its institutional interests—which are not always commensurate with the interests of the wider Catholic community, or even with the policies pursued by the Vatican—through co-operation with political parties. It is worth noting that the PRCC's party preferences frequently change according to the interests involved (see Chapter 5); equally, these interests themselves change—this applies even to issues that the Church declares to be its perennial priorities. The issue of abortion legislation and the place it occupied on the list of the PRCC's priorities before 1989 and the early 1990s is a good illustration of this phenomenon. Before 1989, the Church displayed little interest in the issue of abortion, as it was low on the list of public opinion's priorities. Once it became an object of public attention, the PRCC entered the public debate with considerable authority (see Chapter 4). And from the other side, leaders of political parties and politicians of all ranks often proclaim their allegiance to the Church, as well publicise their religious faith (mostly Roman Catholicism). Manifestos and other party documents often contain numerous references to religion and religiosity, both in terms of values as well as communities and institutions. Many parties in post-communist Poland openly refer to the Catholic Church as



their mentor and guide, particularly in social and cultural matters. Organised religious groups can also influence political society outside party politics. They can do so by channelling their demands through pressure groups and lobbying. This can occur in three ways: religious groups can contact existing pressure groups and present their agenda to them, pressure groups themselves can become religion-oriented, or religious organisations can act as pressure groups themselves. Haynes (1998:7) argues that when religious groups act as pressure groups and not as bodies practising a particular religion they are not always effective, but the political reality of post-1989 Poland seems to disprove this generalisation. The PRCC is the foremost religious pressure group, and exercises that pressure in numerous ways—mostly through the activities of its hierarchy and local clergy, as well as through statements and declarations on public policy. The drafting of the new Polish constitution in the early 1990s is but one example of how the Church has acted as a pressure group using a variety of methods (see Chapter 4). Another way in which religion can significantly impact on political society in a liberal democracy is at the level of the general population. In a political sense, a large part of the general population (i.e. those with voting rights) constitutes the main source of political power—the electorate. Voting behaviour is one of the main channels of religious influence on society. Religion can influence voters as both a passive factor (values, ideas) and an active one (organisational or as a mobilising factor). As the example of the US shows us, religious beliefs and their correlation with voting patterns can be strong enough to decide the results of elections (Page 2004; Pew Forum 2008). In terms of the active influence of religion on voters, particularly in periods of public controversy and times of cultural mobilisation, religion can greatly influence the general population in public debates. Additionally, a group's voting behaviour can be influenced by religious tradition and history in connection with their ethnicity, race and other elements of their identity. The history of post-communist Poland is abundant with examples of the Church influencing voting behaviour by multiple channels and methods, reaching the general population

through official PRCC statements, as well as sermons, and, of course, RE instruction in state schools, amongst others.

Although voting remains the main instance of the population's influence on political society, there are other forms of civic participation that can be influenced by religion. Casanova (1994) lists three areas of particular significance: mass protest, civic disobedience and political violence. It is worth noting that all three forms of active protest were present during the communist period (1944-1989), and their legacy is directly relevant to Poland's political reality after the democratic transformation. But, as the analysis of the Polish case study shows, political violence and civic disobedience are now marginal—almost non-existent—phenomena in Polish political life. However, various forms of mass protest are popular ways of expressing popular opinion, and are widely used by religious groups. Although the PRCC hierarchy and official Church institutions refrained from the use of mass protest in post-1989 Poland, numerous groups within the Church frequently used this tool to influence public policy. In particular, the radical conservative Catholics centred upon Radio Maryja (RM) and its media empire (RMG) have developed a repertoire of political activism involving mass-protest (see Chapter 5). The activities of RMG, a media empire that includes a daily newspaper, a TV channel and a radio station, is only nominally linked to the PRCC, but enjoys operational and financial independence from it, and brings in another aspect of religion's interaction with the polity, which involves civil society.

As mentioned before, the legacy of the communist era left the PRCC positioned between political and civil societies and, despite numerous attempts from both the PRCC hierarchy and non-religious actors in political society to position religion within civil society, this issue is still a source of major friction in Poland's public life. In recent years, scholars have paid increasing attention to the role of religion in the public sphere, with particular reference to the role of religious groups in democratic transformation and in the building of a civil society in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America (Casanova 1994; Stepan and Linz 1996; Herbert

1998; Potter et al. 1997). One of the most important issues within this field of study pertains to the place of religion, and, more particularly, churches and religious organisations, within civil society. As religious organisations are not primarily interested in either economic gain or political power, and are for the most part based on voluntary membership, they are part of civil society. They can, therefore, become legitimate participants in civil society, and act as such (Borowik 2008). And yet, the absolute nature of religious belief and the normative character of religious doctrines mean that religious communities and organisations are often concerned with their members' loyalty and obedience to the group, which is not characteristic of non-religious civil society organisations.

Whether or not religious groups can be classified as civil society organisations, in whole or in part, there are numerous, essential links between religion and civil society within a liberal-democratic polity. Lowry (2005) suggests that religion has a substantial impact on civil society, and that alongside education and public policy, religion is one of the most important influences on the vitality of civil society. Two levels of interaction between religion and civil society are of particular importance for this thesis: (1) the interaction between religion and civil society as part of the polity triangle, occurring through civil society's political activity and interaction with the state; and (2) the relevance of religion as a social force in the creation and functioning of civil society independently of religion. The second level of interaction is particularly important in the context of modernisation and secularisation, as the PRCC was an important actor shaping post-communist Poland's civil society for decades, and slowing certain secularisation processes (see Chapter 2).

The first level of interaction depends on the influence of religion on civil society, on the strength of the latter and the relationships between all three pillars of a democratic polity. Whereas both state and society are permanent and stable, the place and strength of civil society vary greatly over space and time. This flexibility is at the origin of a very complex relationship between civil society and religion, particularly in the public sphere.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, civil society is frequently contrasted with political society and the state, as it involves groups and organisations that do not seek political office and are not part of the state apparatus. This means that in a liberal democracy, civil society organisations are not competing for government posts. This, however, does not mean that they have no political relevance. Civil society organisations can have a profound influence on political society and the state through a range of methods, including lobbying the government and other state institutions, forming alliances with political organisations and mobilising their followers to support their agenda. Cohen and Arato (1992:x) add that civil society organisations can generate influence through ‘the life of democratic associations and unconstrained discussion in the cultural public sphere’, suggesting that public debates involving civil society can be an important form of influence on politics and state.

The arsenal of other indirect methods of influencing politics which civil society organisations can employ is very diverse, and not dissimilar to the methods employed by political society members themselves, including the use of media and the sensitising of public opinion. Casanova (1994:218) divides the interventions of religious groups into ‘agonical’, such as anti-abortion campaigns in the US and Europe, and ‘discursive’, such as pastoral letters and other communications issued by religious institutions. This division seems very suitable for the Polish post-1989 case study, as the history of public debates in the 1990s and 2000s is full of both agonical and discursive interventions by religious groups and organisations. The first category includes campaigns focused on priority issues that religious groups declared non-negotiable, such as abortion legislation, same-sex marriage and euthanasia, amongst others. On the other hand, both the PRCC and other (mostly Roman Catholic) organisations engaged in discursive interventions on the occasion of relevant public debates, most often those concerning social and cultural matters, and less often on issues concerning the economy (see Chapter 5).

The second level at which the relationship between religion and civil society can be explored pertains to the very ability of civil society to function in conditions where one religion

(or a few religions) dominates the social sphere. As mentioned above, in certain non-democratic contexts, religion and state can co-exist in a way that would prevent certain forms of civil society from developing and functioning. Theocracies such as Iran and Saudi Arabia are examples of such a setting—there is no freedom of association in either of these countries, and the activities of both civil society organisations and certain religious organisations (primarily non-Muslim) are severely restricted (Kazemipur and Razaei 2003; Al-Atawneh 2009). Conversely, communist regimes such as the ex-USSR, China and North Korea restrict the functioning of religion and civil society because of their secular character (see Ramet 1993). The restrictiveness of a ruling regime such as a theocracy or communist state can lead to the imposition of limits on religion and civil society in two ways: by restricting the functioning of civil society itself (thus preventing any religious activity within it) and by distorting the links between religion and civil society. Domineering religious communities and institutions can limit the functioning of non-religious organisations as well as that of other religious organisations that remain in conflict with the dominant religion. Borowik (2008) observes that the Catholic Church is more likely to act as a civil society organisation when it is in a position of minority or its rights are infringed upon—and much less so when it dominates the religious landscape, as it is in Poland.

The same repressive role of a dominant religion can be observed on an individual level. Religion's social significance can constrain the development of individual autonomy (Gellner in Herbert 2003:76)—a situation that can be observed in certain traditional societies in Asia and Africa (see Kasfir 1998). Since 'individuals, who are not able to act independently of the community of believers cannot become the building-stones of the kind of intermediary organizations on which civil society is built' (Ozdalga 1997:74), traditional religiosity can obstruct the construction of civil society. Although the social control exercised by religion in Poland diminished greatly over the years, as privatisation of religion progressed, certain elements of it, including in family and community life, remain firmly in place (Baniak 2008).

Casanova (1994:218) mentions another context wherein religion's public presence can interfere with civil society: civil religion. Although civil religion and a vibrant civil society can coexist, the dominance of civil religion sets the tone of public debate and imposes certain limits on civil society organisations. The term 'civil religion', coined by Bellah (1967), and originally used to describe the role of religion in the USA, refers to a universal religion of a nation, expressed through civil religious beliefs, symbols and rituals that provide a religious dimension to the entirety of social life. Bellah's contention is that cultural institutions, including religion, are usually matched up with certain kinds of social groups. In the USA, for example, religion as a social phenomenon is represented by groups such as churches, education in schools, businesses and politicians, amongst others. Civil religion is unique in that it does not claim an identifiable social group, but rather the whole nation. Similarly, countries dominated by a civil religion tend not to have a single national church, but have several significant religious groups competing for public attention. This means that politicians and other public figures are expected to publicly present their religious views. As the US example shows, civil religion as such is not an obstacle to civil society. Conversely, the predominance of a single religious tradition and its merging with state and political society have a profound effect on the relationship between different actors within the polity and support for the public presence of religion.

Although Poland does not have a civil religion, the dominant position of Roman Catholicism and its main institutional representative has largely influenced the development of civil society in post-1989 Poland. All of the Freedom House 'Nations in Transit' reports (Freedom House 2000-2008) list the Catholic Church as the main instigator and key supporter of civil society in Poland, tracing this influence back to the role of the PRCC during the communist period (see Chapter 3); the biggest non-governmental organisations in post-communist Poland include Caritas Poland, the charitable arm of the Catholic Church, for instance. Paliwod (2007) suggests that religious organisations affiliated with the Catholic Church, if treated as a single body, represent the biggest civil society group in the country, with

over 340 associations and 2.5 million members. Although the number of organisations and their membership of the Catholic community are definitely at the forefront of Polish civil society, however, the activities of the PRCC and various Church groups and organisations suggest a more complex political picture. And one of the biggest questions in the assessment of the relationship between religion and politics in Poland pertains to the attitude of religious organisations to democracy and democratisation.

### **Religion, democracy, democratisation**

In the previous parts of this chapter I have identified a number of ways in which religion and politics interact, analysing numerous expressions of religious presence and religious interaction with civil and political societies and the state along the way. Two of the most important questions that follow from the analysis of possible interactions between religion and politics are: under what conditions does religion become active within the democratic polity? And why does it become an active participant of the democratisation process by engaging in different relations with civil society, political society and the state?

As mentioned earlier, there are numerous overlaps between religion and all three pillars of modern democratic polity. The relationship between religion and democracy has engaged scholars for long time, but remains a relatively undefined area. With a wave of democratic transformations spanning the globe from Latin America to South-East Asia in recent decades, the issue has gained relevance (Casanova 1994). Philpott, Duffy and Toft (2011) have examined 82 democratic transformation processes that took place between 1972 and 2000, and concluded that religious actors played a significant and constructive role in about a third of cases. Huntington (1991:76) suggests that three-quarters of all the countries that moved towards democracy between 1974 and 1990 were dominated by Catholicism.

Post-communist Poland, as a recently democratised Catholic country, is a relevant case for the study of the links between religion and democratisation. Religion certainly played an important part in the democratisation process in Poland, and the links between religion (especially the Catholic Church) and democratisation warrant closer investigation.

The Catholic Church's role involved different internal and external factors. Some authors (Gutierrez 1973; Huntington 1991) focus on the importance of internal factors: especially the evolution of the Catholic Church's policies after the Second World War and the changes instituted by the Second Vatican Council. These authors suggest that internal factors had a decisive role in defining the Church's active involvement in democratisation processes. However, although historical changes brought about by the Second World War and Vatican II<sup>8</sup> had some relevance for the Polish Church, the fact that Poland was cut off from the mainstream by the Iron Curtain, and was also reluctant to accept the Council's reforms (Gowin 1999), mitigate the influence of these internal factors in the Polish case. What is more, the approach proposed by Gutierrez and Huntington fails to address the issue of the different attitudes of national Catholic churches to democracy and democratisation, despite the unified approach proposed by the Vatican.

Other authors focus on the external environment of the Catholic Church. Gill (1998), for instance, attributes the change in the Catholic Church's behaviour to the presence of competitors, mainly Protestant churches. However, the absence of major non-Catholic political forces in Poland limits the relevance of this approach to the case study. Philpott (2004, 2007) suggests that the relationship between Church and state, and notably the divergences within this relationship, was of utmost importance for the Church's change of policy towards democracy and democratisation. Philpott argues that, in the face of the diminishment of the Church-state alliance, the Church has had to find new ways of appealing to the public, by amending its

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<sup>8</sup> The Second Vatican Council, 1962-1965.



message and activities. This thesis has limited relevance to the case of post-communist Poland as the relationship of Church and state remains close, and yet religion and the Church itself maintain a high public visibility and influence on politics.

The third strand of theories seeking to explain the political activity of religion, and the Catholic Church in particular, draws on Social Movement Theory (SMT), and focuses on both internal and external factors, thus providing a more complete picture. A recent study of democratic transformation (Mantilla 2010), suggests that the variables employed in SMT analysis are the most appropriate in explaining the political activism of the Catholic Church. In SMT, analysing the political activity of religious groups requires an understanding of three categories: motive, means and opportunity. In order to analyse all three categories, SMT draws on three sets of variables: cultural and identity frames, resource mobilisation and political-opportunity structures. In order to grasp religion's influence on individual and group preferences, cultural identity theory is employed. Furthermore, theories of resource mobilisation are used to analyse religious organisations' potential for political mobilisation. In order to assess the opportunities available to religious organisations and to show how they bring together means and motive for the sake of political activity, SMT draws on the theories of political opportunity and contentious politics. All of the above-mentioned key elements of SMT theory are inherently connected, and cannot be interpreted separately (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996).

In the case of post-communist Poland, one of the key questions is what motivates religious institutions, particularly the Catholic Church, to actively engage in politics. Walt, Silverman and Fridy (2005) contend that there is no necessary link between religious communities and political action. For such a link to be formed, three conditions must be met: religious groups must consider political action to be their sacred obligation; they must draw on internal resources to put political action in motion; and a political environment must exist that religious groups can confront.

The PRCC often acts as if obliged to take up political action—if not for religious reasons, then for historical and cultural ones. Religion and culture shape each other, and thus cultural theory offers a substantial insight into how religion shapes individual preferences, which can be an important motive for the political mobilisation of religious organisations. According to Wildavsky (1987), culture confers identity, prescribes behavioural norms and maintains boundaries for relationships. By providing values and norms and sustaining social networks, culture limits the number of choices available to individuals. It also has the potential to direct individual preferences in such a way that they limit the range of acceptable choices, thus performing a ‘power and control’ function. This in turn can be used by religious groups in political mobilisation, as religious groups can be creators and maintainers of culture and strongly rely on it as a resource (see below). Swidler (1986) argues that culture can be a ‘tool kit’ for constructing political-action strategies, adding that connections between culture and action are easier to conclude during unsettled cultural periods. On the other hand, political elites may exploit cultural and religious grievances for the purposes of power and authority. In this process, religious grievances can function as political motives for mobilising religious groups.

As post-communist Poland’s religious and political landscape is largely shaped by the country’s history (see Chapter 3), cultural analysis proves essential for understanding contemporary religious processes in Poland. Not only are Polish national and religious identities merged as a result of historical processes of foreign domination, but the PRCC has a virtual monopoly on the religious market. Minority religions account for less than 5% of the total population (WVS 2012). New religious movements, a popular phenomenon in most European countries, have not recruited a substantial number of followers in post-1989 Poland. Statistics show that both the Catholic Church and a large part of the population are hostile towards minority religions (RAS 2010). Despite the state’s liberal policy towards religious organisations, the PRCC (and Roman Catholicism in general) continue to dominate the public sphere in terms of religious presence and activity. Two interconnected cultural characteristics foster the Polish

Church's high involvement in the political life of the country: the pursuit of hegemony and the motivation to maintain a 'market share' for Catholicism in Poland. Both are results of the historical importance of the Church in Poland, as well as the consequence of recent population changes, which have given Roman Catholicism a near monopoly. The PRCC is a dominant institution with substantial professional cadres, and as such tends to defend its corporate position. Anderson (2010) suggests that both the pursuit of hegemony and the drive to maintain a market change are key motivators for the Church in public life. Ramet (1998:293) describes the PRCC as a 'Julianic Church'—i.e. an institution that, given access to power, '[tries] to use state mechanisms to impose the rules and religious values of its own faith on everyone living in the territory of the given society, including those believers who subscribe to other faiths'.

The will to dominate and institute would not have materialised if it were not for the resources the Polish Church commands. Resource-mobilisation theory, a strand within SMT (Wald, Silverman and Fridy 2005:31), suggests that religious grievances can only be transformed into effective political action if the group concerned has the relevant organisational capacity. Resources such as culture, leadership, material resources, communication networks and political space allow social movements to succeed. This explanatory mechanism is very applicable to contemporary Poland. Most of the public interventions of a religious nature in Poland's politics draw on the resources commanded by the PRCC. It remains the largest independent social organisation in Poland, and has substantial human, material and financial resources at its disposal. The PRCC is currently the second biggest landowner in the country, after the state (Przekrój 2007, and as noted above). In terms of non-material resources, the PRCC enjoys high—although declining—social authority (RAS 2010) and an exclusive status in most public debates (see chapters 4 and 5).

The last set of conditions that facilitate the Church's high public visibility includes external incentives and disincentives for political mobilisation. Opportunity is the key to social movements' positioning in political life, as they operate in an environment full of formal and

informal structures. According to Tarrow (1994), access to institutional participation, the flexibility of political alignments, conflicts within the political elite and the assistance of powerful allies are most relevant to collective mobilisation. Religious organisations are more likely to mobilise politically in open, democratic systems than in authoritarian and non-democratic ones. Repressive regimes tend to limit the political activity of religious groups. Conversely, uncertain political alignments, more typical of transitional and less consolidated democracies, foster political mobilisation. In such cases, religious groups are more likely to find political solutions to their grievances. Conflicts within political elites are another important factor influencing the political mobilisation of religious actors. Having analysed the US and Canadian political systems, particularly electoral and legislative structures, Tatalovich (1995) concludes that those conflicts are structural in nature, which means that they are not inherent to particular religious communities, but result from the current political structure.

The assistance of powerful allies within and outside the political system is the last of the four factors shaping political opportunity—and not the least important one. Wald, Silverman and Fridy (2005:138) state that ‘political means are endogenous resources’ and ‘[p]olitical opportunities are exogenous resources to a social movement’. Thus, the support and encouragement of friends and allies in high positions cannot be classified as a resource, but they are very significant for the mobilisation of religious groups within the democratic polity.

The PRCC has such powerful allies. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Polish Church co-operated with a range of political actors on a number of issues. The PRCC tends to prioritise issues on its agenda and co-opt political partners accordingly, regardless of their political profile. No single Polish political party enjoyed the PRCC’s support for the whole duration of the democratic transition. Conversely, numerous political parties declared unwavering support for the PRCC’s policies and moral authority, as well as recognising its high importance in public affairs (see chapters 4 and 5). Despite continuously low public support for the Church-state/party-Church alliances, both in terms of PRCC involvement in politics

and party allegiance to the Church, both sides continue to benefit from this reciprocity. Other important allies of the Church in the public sphere include trades unions and right-wing civic organisations—mostly those concerned with morality and family and traditional and national values.

## **Conclusion**

The close relationship between religion and politics in post-communist Poland is largely due to the complex nature of the democratic transformation. As this thesis aims to show, the relevance of the communist legacy and the first years of transformation to the relationship between religion and politics in contemporary Poland are far greater than with respect to other areas of political life. The high visibility of republicised religion in public life is one of the most characteristic features of post-communist Poland. Whereas many other areas of the polity have been transformed, and kept changing throughout the first two decades of transition, the relationship between religion and politics and the high visibility of religion were sustained in the long-term.

Stepan's model of three policy pillars is instrumental in understanding the democratic transformation process in post-communist Poland. The changes to the state structures, as well as those affecting political society and rebirth of the civil society after decades of communist rule, defined the shape of the new social and political order. In order to make sense of religion in public life in post-communist Poland, the relationship between three pillars of the polity has to be thoroughly analysed, and the relationship between religion and the polity has to be explored. One of the most important dimensions of this analysis is the relationship between Church and state. As Maduro (2002) remarks, in a situation of the separation of Church and state, the latter usually has primacy over the former, as it defines the legal and political

framework for co-operation. This was not exactly the case in post-communist Poland. The weaknesses of the state and political society in the first years of transformation provided fertile ground for the PRCC to pursue its own agenda and influence the state apparatus. To complement this, the Church became an active political actor and influenced the transformation of political society. Last but not least, the reborn civil society was strongly influenced by the Church and its satellite organisations, which dominated the participation of non-state actors in the early 1990s. The political developments of the first two decades of Polish transformation (see chapters 3-5) fully illustrate the ways in which the Church seized the opportunity to interact with all aspects of the polity. In order to fully understand the mechanisms behind this behaviour, the motivation behind such actions needs to be understood.

One of the key categories in understanding the new place of religion in Poland will be the concept of praetorianism, denoting a situation where, in the absence of stable institutions to channel public and political opinions, non-political organisations become carriers of public and political sentiment and power. As I aim to show in Chapter 3, the PRCC became such an organisation during the communist period, particularly in the symbolic realm (as opposed to institutional praetorianism and functioning as a part of political institutional framework, which only occurred briefly in late 1980s and early 1990s). The Church's behaviour in post-communist Poland was influenced by the role it occupied in the communist era. After the fall of communism, religion and religious organisations had to negotiate a new place within the polity, as the external environment had changed. Social Movement Theory (SMT), notably its resource-mobilisation strand, provides a comprehensive set of tools to analyse both the internal and external factors that motivate religious organisations to act in public life. The understanding of three principal categories—motive, means and opportunity—is crucial in analysing the Church's activity within the post-communist polity. As post-communist transformation is a particular form of polity transformation, theories of democratisation need to be employed to grasp the particularities of the interventions of a religious actor such as the PRCC in the conditions of

transformation. In the next chapter, I will be reviewing the most important theories of religious change, notably the secularisation thesis and its numerous revisions, and their relevance to the case study.

## Chapter 2: Secularisation and Religious Change

Chapter 1 has focused on the background to the study of religion and politics, notably the three pillars of the polity and the relevant theories addressing the relationship between religion and politics. The main aim of this chapter is to review theories of secularisation in relation to the Polish case study, particularly where they explain changes in the public dimension of religion and religiosity in social life. The secularisation thesis, and its various revisions and criticisms, have dominated the study of religious change in sociology and political science over the last four decades. As the 'death of religion was the conventional wisdom in the social sciences during most of the twentieth century' (Norris and Inglehart 2004:3), ideas of secularisation became highly prominent.

In this chapter I review the main secularisation theories that have been developed by sociologists of religion since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, and explore other approaches, including criticisms of the original secularisation thesis (an umbrella term comprising many sub-theories, outlined below), its revisions, and alternative theories explaining religious change.

This chapter aims to assess the relevance of mainstream secularisation theories to the modern Polish political landscape—the subject matter of the main body of this thesis. The presumption has been that modern European states move towards secularisation, but this presumption seems misplaced in the context of post-1989 public life in Poland. Other theories, including those of rational choice or deprivatisation, have little application in contemporary Poland. The thesis hopes to answer how, and to what extent, republicised religion continues to dominate Polish political life. This chapter further argues that the mainstream secularisation theories do not allow for a full understanding of post-1989 developments in religion and politics in Poland. This is because they focus mostly on abstract sociological processes (such as differentiation and rationalisation, amongst others), and they do not address human and institutional agency and the role of historical and cultural factors affecting secularisation. As the



research presented in chapters 3-5 will show, it is those factors that largely influenced secularisation processes in post-1989 Poland, leading to a sustained republicisation of religion whilst individual religiosity continued to fall.

### **Secularisation: an introduction**

Secularisation is a key term for understanding the place of religion in the contemporary world, but it is surrounded by confusion and controversy. A distinction needs to be made between the historical origins of the word, its contemporary meaning and the normative understanding of secularisation as a paradigm in the sociology of religion.

Historically, the term has described the transfer of property from ecclesiastical to civil authorities, and was first used with reference to the confiscation of Church property by the king in early modern England (Herbert 2003:29). The term was first employed in the sociology of religion by prominent 19<sup>th</sup>-century thinkers (Max Weber, Emile Durkheim and Herbert Spencer, amongst others), who set out the idea that modernisation would lead to the decreasing importance of religion in industrial society (Bruce 1992:172-195).

Currently, the term has multiple meanings. In a colloquial sense, secularisation defines a change resulting in the loss of influence or control of religion over something. The use of the term in the sociology of religion is rather more complex, and differs from its common use. In the narrowest sense, secularisation is, 'at a political level, the separation of ecclesiastical and state power, with the resulting loss of religious authority in the coercive sense' (Herbert 2003:29). Dobbelaere (2001) suggests a broader application, defined on three levels: societal (separation of Church and state, a decrease in the influence of religious organisations on social life and the diminishment of their social authority); institutional (internal secularisation and transformation of religious institutions); and individual (decrease in practice and belief). It must be noted,

however, that the last level is only relevant insofar as they are linked with the first, and so long as they influence religion's social standing. Wilson (1982:150) confirms that secularisation 'does not even suggest that most individuals have relinquished all their interest in religion, even though that may be the case'. Patrikios (2009:357) further argues that focusing on individual religiosity statistics 'conceals the public role of religion', and that religious authority can remain relevant in society independently of individual religiosity levels. Chaves (1994) adds that secularisation is best understood as referring to the declining scope of religious authority, and is a concept better suited to understanding the complex relationship between different levels of religiosity and different actors and processes. Both Patrikios' and Chaves' contributions to the understanding of secularisation are highly relevant to the contemporary Polish case study, as they focus on the importance of social and institutional levels as key to understanding secularisation, with religious authority operating independently of the changes in individual religiosity.

Moyser (1991) further defines secularisation processes in the political realm (social and institutional levels) using a five-step model. The first stage of political secularisation occurs in the constitutional sphere. It is expressed through the lack of legal recognition of and support for religion and, indeed, any particular religious institution or group. The following stage, policy secularisation, can be identified as a consequence of the entry of state institutions into policy domains previously assigned to, or reserved for, religious bodies. Institutional secularisation, the third stage of political secularisation, occurs when religious institutions and structures lose their lobbying power and influence on political organisations. Agenda secularisation, the fourth expression of the secularisation process, can be observed when political society has no overtly religious content. And finally, ideological secularisation occurs when values and belief systems that function within the political realm are no longer phrased in religious terms (Moyser 1991:14-15). Moyser's five-step model provides a simple and efficient tool for assessing the levels of secularisation in contemporary Poland (see Chapter 5). First of all, it distinguishes between five

levels of political secularisation evolving one from another—a phenomenon widely present in many Western European countries, and also expected of the democratising Polish state after 1989. Second, it focuses on different aspects of public life, including the activities of three polity pillars: state, political society and civil society, all of which will be analysed in further chapters of this thesis.

Defining secularisation, however challenging, proves an easy task compared with attempting a more in-depth analysis of why it occurs and what the patterns and rules are that govern the process.

### **The secularisation thesis**

The secularisation thesis, despite criticisms of it, occupies a central place among theories of religious change. It is a complex research framework combined with an explanatory model, the main premise of which is the contention that modernisation has a negative impact on religion and religiosity. It must be noted that the secularisation thesis is not entirely coherent, and has been approached differently by different groups of scholars who worked independently of each other over a period of almost half a century. Tschannen (1991) contends that at the theoretical level, various theories of secularisation have been systematically stated, but they cannot be combined into one single, coherent super-theory. At the paradigmatic level, however, he concludes that ‘theoretical divergences largely dissolve, a number of shared “concepts” impose themselves, and a fairly coherent picture of secularization emerges’ (1991:396).

Tschannen identifies four core processes common to all secularisation theories: differentiation, modernisation, rationalisation and worldliness. The latter process is the least considered in scholarly writing, and is not as complex as the other three. A similar analytical framework to Tschannen’s is applied throughout later scholarly writings on secularisation.

Herbert (2003), in his account of the relations between religion and civil society in four countries around the globe (Egypt, Bosnia, Poland and the UK), points to five main pillars of the secularisation process (Herbert 2003:35-43), adding societalisation (break-up of local communities resulting from migration) to the list of core processes identified by Tschannen.

Differentiation 'is absolutely central to all the secularization theories, without exception' (Tschannen 1991:404). In the briefest terms it is understood to be a process in which a domain of meaning—previously understood as specifically religious—becomes differentiated from a religious world-view (Heelas 1998:2). This process brings about, amongst other things, a division between the public and private realms: one being the world of public activity, most often related to work, and the other being private and related to home and family life. This transition allows for a distinction to be made between public and private behaviour in many spheres of life, including religion. As a result of differentiation processes, religion does not become one of the 'differentiated' areas, but becomes fragmented and split between the other areas, such as economics, politics, culture or ethics, thereby retaining some influence over all of them.

Like another theorist, Luckmann (discussed below), Berger (1967) attributes high importance to modernisation processes and the differentiation that follows. In Berger's view, secularisation is caused by a wide-reaching process: the emergence of monotheism, Protestantism and modern industry. Parsons (1964) also contributes to this debate by providing a typology of social differentiation, distinguishing 'vertical differentiation' (social stratification) from 'horizontal differentiation' (i.e. between social functions or through overriding kinship ties), and these from differentiation between culture and social systems, occurring when a system of beliefs such as Christianity becomes differentiated from social structures (Parsons 1964:343).

The second key trend in secularisation processes—societalisation—is strongly related to the economic developments of modernity. It is a process by which 'life is increasingly enmeshed

and organised, not locally but societally', the latter being understood most commonly as the nation state (Wilson 1982:154). Core elements of societalisation are the break-up of small, local communities and the increased mobility of the population. These factors are largely due to the necessity of moving large numbers of workers to urban areas as part of the industrialisation process. Breaking traditional family and community ties results in a general decrease in the importance of religious rituals, beliefs and institutions. It is commonly argued that modern, complex societies do not rely on shared religious beliefs, as the omnipresent state and bureaucracy become the guarantors of social order, instead of previously employed religious beliefs and norms (Herbert 1998:38). This contention brings the societalisation process close to Emile Durkheim's (1967) functionalist theory of religion: he argues that the importance of religion in social life should be understood through the prism of the capabilities of religious norms and laws to knit society together, suggesting that these are diminished and partially replaced by other normative value systems in a post-industrial society.

The third component of the secularisation process differs significantly from the previous two. Whereas both differentiation and societalisation are mostly related to the economic and social realms of human existence, rationalisation is related to ontology and epistemology. In simple terms, rationalisation means that logical and scientific explanations replace those that refer to supernatural agency. This is a process of great significance, as it limits the explicatory powers of religious groups and institutions. In a 'rationalised' society, religious arguments lose their saliency, which then leads to the decreased potential of religion to influence politics and other spheres of social life. Many writers underline the importance of this process in secularisation trends. Wilson (1976) contends that rationalisation is the most important factor in secularisation processes, being both their cause and consequence.

The fourth pillar of secularisation, worldliness, works in conjunction with rationalisation processes, and is less concerned with economic factors than the other two pillars of the secularisation thesis. Worldliness refers to the re-orientation of modern religions and churches

towards this-worldly issues important to an average believer. Those issues can include happiness, achievement and success, both professional and personal (Tschannen 1991:404). In a worldly religion, the everyday concerns of believers can be more important than questions related to the supernatural or the afterlife—as is the case with the phenomenon of New Age spirituality. Berger (1967) also points to the increasing pluralisation of religious views and the worldliness of religious and doctrinal concerns as main causes of secularisation.

Having mentioned the four core elements of the secularisation thesis, it has to be noted that it is not the only model offered by contemporary sociology of religion for the analysis of religiosity in the public realm. The first and most important process underlying secularisation trends—differentiation—has various consequences and is the most complex. Tschannen (1991), by offering a comparative analysis of a wide range of secularisation theories, further identified other minor elements of the paradigm linked to differentiation: the privatisation of belief, whereby religion is considered a private and not a public matter; generalisation, whereby religion pervades secular institutions under disguise; the autonomisation of secular education; the collapse of the religious world-view that occurs when traditional theology loses its credibility, and even theologians recognise the need to revise it; unbelief, expressed through a rise in agnosticism and atheism; religious pluralisation; and a general decline in religious practice. As far as rationalisation is concerned, he adds the following associated phenomena: scientisation (e.g. Copernicus' theory replacing Earth-centred cosmology, evolution versus creationism etc.) and sociologisation, understood as a determination of social life in a rational fashion (e.g. social policies, not Christian ethics, are constructed as an answer to crime).

One of the most intense debates around the issue of secularisation involves the structure of development; in essence, does secularisation follow a linear, cause and effect pattern of formulated conclusions? Is there a necessary and identifiable progression from one condition to the next; a gradual movement from religiosity to secularisation? Are core modernisation processes always conducive to secularisation? These questions are of particular importance to

the further development of this thesis. As research into the relationship between religion and politics in post-1989 Poland will show, many trends associated with the public authority of religion can easily be stopped, reversed or accelerated as a result of actions undertaken by key actors within the democratic polity. This development stands in contrast to the classic approaches within the secularisation thesis.

The first approach, which largely dominated the sociology of religion until the 1980s, perceived secularisation to be part of a wider modernisation trend, and an evolutionary process governing contemporary societies. Parsons (1964) included secularisation processes in his theory of evolutionary universals in society. According to his thesis, which he hoped would contribute to 'evolutionary thinking in sociology' (Parsons 1964:339), contemporary societies are subject to irreversible social change trends that inevitably change the face of the religious realm. Differentiation of social strata is crucial to ensuring a 'transition from primitive social conditions to those of the "archaic" civilizations' (Parsons 1964:339).

Wilson (1976) followed the same logic in his *Contemporary Transformations of Religion*, stressing that secularisation is a gradual process involving a transition from *community* to *society*, and it cannot be stopped or avoided. The author pays particular attention to secularisation as a process that transforms religion around the world to a truly significant degree, because of its broad scope and the scale of fostered change. According to his thesis, belief and commitment to the supernatural are in continual imminent decline. As a result, none of the new religious phenomena or revival waves, such as ecumenism, charismatic religions or New Religious Movements, can have significant social consequences in the modern world. Furthermore, Wilson can see no way that religions can stage a comeback, since they are 'always dying'.

A contemporary echo of Parsons' and Wilson's evolutionary thinking can be found in Bruce's work (2002), devoted to secularisation in the western world. He dismisses the voices announcing a religious revival around the globe and plunges into the various manifestations of spirituality and belief in the West as signs of *relativism*, which affirms the equality of all world

views and opinions—thereby damaging the previously dominant position of religious morality and ethics in a particular society. Bruce systematically challenges the proponents of the Religious Market Theory (RMT, see Norris and Inglehart 2004:16-18), who argue that increased religious supply fosters religious demand, suggesting that Christianity is losing power and popularity in the US, and that it is changing in ways earlier predicted by the secularisation paradigm.

The sort of linear evolutionary movement presented here has long been challenged by certain academics, who approach the secularisation thesis from another angle. Martin (1978) was one of the earliest critics of linear approaches to secularisation and the simplistic conclusions that trumpet the victory of the secular over the religious realm. One of his main contentions is that secularisation can have entirely different consequences in different social environments. According to Martin, crucial questions should be asked: ‘whether or not the religion concerned is Catholic, whether or not there is a monopoly of religion, and whether or not the “frame” of the society is set up through conflict against internal oppressors’ (1978:17). He uses the examples of France and the US to show that secularisation can result in the polarisation of both Catholics and laymen (in France), but that in a pluralist society such as the US no such conflict can occur. This is an interesting observation for the Polish case study, which this thesis is focusing on, as it suggests that religious and political actors can have a significant impact on the course of secularisation. In post-communist Poland, the collaboration between religious and political actors has largely preserved the high visibility of religion in public life. In his most recent work (2006), Martin echoes some of his earlier writings by stating that, even though religious and non-religious realms have become increasingly differentiated in the modern world, religious values (and Christian values in particular) remain influential in and relevant to modern societies. Quite importantly, Martin notes the shifting shapes of popular religiosity through which religion maintains its presence in the social realm. Alignment of a religion with the national rhetoric, a certain political project or the arts can be seen as a ‘displacement’ through which religions thrive.



The classic secularisation thesis, presented above, although widely criticised (see below), remains a valid point of reference for the study of secularisation in contemporary societies, not least because all other theories position themselves against its basic tenets. Many developments in post-1989 Poland follow the movement of the secularisation thesis: modernisation, rationalisation and social differentiation have reshaped the place of religion in public life and maintained their influence on the role of religion in society. However, the high visibility of religion in public life and the close relationship between religion—particularly the PRCC—and Poland’s political society suggest an enlarged scope of analysis involving other theories of religious change.

### **Privatisation and individualisation**

The first attempts at challenging the secularisation thesis occurred with the emergence of the privatisation and individualisation thesis. Although still acknowledging the impact of modernisation on religiosity, this thesis paints a more complex picture of religious change. Particular attention is paid to the influence of modernisation processes on institutionalised, Church-oriented religiosity on the one hand, and private, individual religiosity on the other. The proponents of the privatisation/individualisation thesis do not deny the marginalisation of institutionalised, Church-centred religion, and they pay due attention to differentiation processes (see below). Instead, the main difference is a belief in the general decline in the significance of religion. According to theories of privatisation/individualisation, the former official and hierarchical religious model will ultimately be replaced by private and individual forms of belief.

One of the first attempts at building a nuanced approach to understanding religious change was made by Luckmann in his *Invisible Religion* (1967). The starting point for Luckmann’s

theoretical considerations is an undifferentiated world view and a functional view of religion. Luckmann identifies five meanings of the notion of 'religion'. The first and most basic meaning concerns the dialectical process of socialisation through which people aim to transcend their biological nature, seeking to explain their existence through a higher being or authority. All four remaining meanings derive from the first. The second and third meanings denote the universal, functional meaning-system that influences both societal and personal levels of identification, and the fourth and fifth refer to a specific belief system held at the societal and personal levels.

For Luckmann, the defining process in the contemporary transformation of religion is differentiation at the conscious (individual) level, occurring when the previously homogenous and universal world-views and judgements start splitting into different layers. What follows is the rise of a differentiated social base: religious institutions. This rapid change has severe consequences for social life, both in its worldly and transcendental dimensions. Luckmann contends that the autonomisation of other aspects of life follows, as a result of which religion loses control over other social spheres. Pluralisation of concurring worldviews then causes religious interpretations of reality to lose their appeal and subsequently to collapse. The third and most important consequence of differentiation is privatisation—a situation where individuals build their own vision of the world based on voluntarily selected, distinct, often mutually exclusive world-views. Luckmann focuses on what he sees as the two most important aspects of this privatisation of religion: 'religious themes born in this private sphere (...) [that] become generalized and start to function as a new, "invisible" religion' (Tschannen 1991:398). This then leads to an increase in the 'this-worldliness' of religious conviction and a greater preoccupation with everyday life. According to other proponents of the individualisation thesis, people are free to determine the shape and content of their new, private religions, unlike in hierarchical religious communities such as the Catholic Church, which precisely regulates the rules governing the lives of its followers (Krech 1999:68).

The individual's ability to choose the elements of religion and belief that he or she finds suitable results in the decreased importance of unified religious traditions (detraditionalisation) and loss of Church authority and importance (deinstitutionalisation). The latter has profound consequences for the position of religious institutions in Europe. First of all, mainstream churches lose their monopoly on the 'religious market'. Until recently, most Europeans belonged to either the Catholic Church or a Protestant denomination. In contemporary Europe there are now numerous alternatives, a plurality that undermines the status quo; in turn, lower Church authority has contributed to the increased pluralism within religious organisations and groups (Krüggeler 2001:24-26). Diminished Church authority consequently means that churches have reduced means of social control, when high levels of religious practice in European countries were once conditioned by socio-cultural mechanisms repeated for centuries. Falling church attendance is one manifestation of the loosening of the social control previously enjoyed by mainstream churches.

Gabriel (2000) suggests that the main expression of the individualisation and deinstitutionalisation of religion in Christian Europe is the deinstitutionalisation of Christian communities, known as *Entkirchlung* (from German *Kirche*, church). In pluralist societies, as churches lose their grip on individual and social life they cease to be a universally recognised social actor. According to Gabriel (2000:10-11) this is a three-tier process:

- Decreased participation in institutional religion, expressed by the distancing of the population from religious dogma, religious cult and ritual and behavioural patterns prescribed by the Church;
- Liberating social sub-systems and institutions such as politics, academia, education, economy and science from the Church's influence;
- Loss of importance (or even disappearance) of religious and symbolic forms of social integration.

The other strand of the privatisation/individualisation thesis pertains to the process of individuals moving away from historically negotiated social forms and traditional social bonds. This form of self-determination does not mean that individuals free themselves from society and exist in some sort of extra-social reality, but that they are free to make individual choices, and have to bear the responsibility for making them. Individualisation changes both religion and religiosity. Religion is no longer just an element of culture, but also a matter of personal choice; as a private matter, it does not occupy such a central position in public life. External factors influenced by religious identity, such as family and tradition, lose their importance. Individuals are responsible for finding their own responses to ultimate questions, meaning that they are free to decide when to end their lives and how to live them, leading to further pluralisation of world-views. Individuals belonging to mainstream churches tend to question dogma, and liberally combine elements of different faiths according to their personal needs. The last important consequence of religious individualisation relates to the institutional shape of new religious phenomena. New forms of religiosity arise outside of the official and historical churches—this does not mean that religiosity declines in general, but that it takes on new forms outside traditional structures (Wohlrab-Sahr 2003).

Theories of privatisation and individualisation have some applicability when assessing the historical background to post-1989 changes in Poland's religious landscape (see Chapter 3). The limitations of the privatisation thesis in relation to communist Poland result from the fact that the communist regime suppressed the private sphere and denied its separation from state and society. Poland was, however, subject to forced privatisation of religion between 1944 and 1989. Although it was not a natural sociological process, but a result of communist policy towards religion, it left a lasting mark on religion and the Church in Poland. During the communist years, religion was suppressed from many areas of public life—including education and media, and its possibility to organise high-visibility events was highly restricted (with minor exceptions, such as the 1979 papal visit to Poland, see Chapter 3). For most Poles, notably those

who were members of the communist party, or who wanted to pursue careers in state institutions, religion had to become a totally private affair. This forced change was an important influence on the PRCC, and had an impact on its return to public life after the collapse of communism, including its behaviour in the first years of democratic transformation (see Chapter 4).

### **Postsecularisation/deprivatisation thesis**

Casanova (1994) interrogates the secularisation thesis, arguing that it wrongly combines three distinct processes into one over-arching theory, and thus blurs the picture of secularisation; he also provides compelling evidence that the transformation of religion in contemporary European states is not a one-way street, and that in certain contexts religion can ‘de-privatise’—that is, leave the private sphere and re-emerge in the public sphere.

Casanova’s postsecularisation thesis distinguishes three interrelated but separate markers, broadly echoing Tschannen’s four-part model: differentiation (including secularisation of some spheres of social life), the decline of religious beliefs and practices, and the privatisation of religion (marginalisation of religion into the private sphere). However, whereas he agrees with proponents of the secularisation thesis that modernisation has a certain causal effect, he insists that a decline in religious practices and the privatisation of religion do not follow automatically. According to Casanova, for all three processes to occur at the same time a church-state alliance has to be in place, and an Enlightenment Critique of Religion (ECR) must be present. Using the examples of post-Frankist Spain and post-Solidarity Poland, Casanova formulates the hypothesis that resisting, or even not keeping up with, democratic changes can be damaging to the Church institution’s standing.

This theory is of particular use to this research project, as it distinguishes between the modernisation processes and private/public religiosity at the same time as it identifies important relations between them. And one of the limitations of Casanova's thesis is actually of direct benefit to this thesis, as it is based on the experiences of Catholic societies.

Casanova also makes an important observation about deprivatisation, a process in many ways contrary to secularisation. Casanova points to the development of communication technologies and the emergence of a transnational civil society (particularly important in the transition from communism in Eastern Europe) as the causes of the deprivatisation of religion in Spain, Poland and Brazil. Deprivatisation is a process by which religion leaves the private sphere and re-enters many spheres of social life from which it was previously ostracised as a result of differentiation and privatisation processes (Casanova 1994:211). Casanova argues that, although deprivatising religion allows it to enter all areas of democratic polity—including civil society, political society and the state—by doing so religion risks losing popular support, due to ECR. Casanova's contention is that religion, and, more specifically, the Catholic Church, should not penetrate civil society and the realm of the state because of potential conflicts between the democratic character of civil society and the absolutist tendencies of religious organisations. Casanova sees the Church's involvement in politics as inherently undemocratic: behaviour that further threatens the credibility of religion (Casanova 1996).

### **Cultural defence/cultural transition**

Bruce (1998) suggests that the relationship between modernisation and secularisation can be redefined under certain conditions pertaining to culture and politics. The first—cultural defence—occurs when religious identity and religious institutions/organisations adopt defensive measures

in a fight with a hostile force, such as an actor (occupant) or ideology (secular or religious doctrine).

The second context—cultural transition—is largely similar to the first, only that the ‘hostile force’ is not an external actor or ideology but rather a cultural process, such as modernisation or migration. Religious identity and religious organisations are valid points of reference and sources of stability in a changing environment, as they strengthen group unity and a sense of belonging. Bruce stresses the fact that religious diversity undermines religion’s unifying potential, as religiously homogenous countries are better suited to maintaining their identity vis-à-vis their oppressors (Bruce 2009).

Unfortunately, Bruce’s theory has limited relevance to the Polish case. Although cultural defence was a driving mechanism that sustained Polish religiosity during the communist years, in the absence of a hostile force in post-1989 Poland this became less pertinent. Despite some attempts made by the Polish Church to portray modernising forces such as the European Union as the new occupiers, no cultural mobilisation mechanism can be observed in post-communist Poland.

What is more, Bruce’s ‘barometric’ approach to religion, as a factor dependent solely on cultural defence and cultural transition and decreasing in importance once those circumstances cease to exist, does not account for institutional frameworks and social processes. Starrett (1998:227-228) points out that ‘religions (...) take on a very life of their own with interest, dynamics and potentials that are only incompletely determined by the intersections of forces that brought them about’.

## Religious resurgence

Resurgence theories, or desecularisation theories, surfaced in the works of Kepel (1993), Berger (1999), Juergensmeyer (2000) and Huntington (1996). Kepel's *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World* (1993) is a survey of religious resurgence in the three Abrahamic faiths. Kepel challenges the belief, dominant among western sociologists of religion, that the rapid modernisation of western societies and the privatisation of religion have led to immediate secularisation. Kepel picks three milestone events that had a profound influence on global politics in the late 1970s—the electoral success of the *Likud* party in Israel in 1977, the election of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła as the Supreme Pontiff in 1978 and the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979—arguing that religion is gaining ground across the globe, and that the prediction mechanism deducted from secularisation theories is wrong. Kepel contends that modernisation, the very same force his colleagues claimed would bring about secularisation, has essentially failed, and excluded many social groups, and has therefore prepared the ground for a return of religion to the public square. The author lists recent failures—disenchantment with Marxism, industrialisation, mass migration, economic crises and technological progress—as factors that have contributed to the resurgence of Christianity, Islam and Judaism in North America, Europe and the Middle East. Kepel's approach is valuable to this particular thesis because it takes into account cultural differences and the particularities of national character that can influence the course of the secularisation process, countering many previous theories that proclaim an equal effect of modernisation trends across the world regardless of cultural differences. As the history of Polish national identity and its links with religious identity shows (see Chapter 3), historical and cultural factors can greatly influence the course of secularisation. The behaviour of the PRCC (as well as the behaviour of state and political actors towards religion) in the first years of democratic transformation show the great potential of path-



dependency (i.e. reproducing behaviour based on historical premises) in the relations between religion and politics in Poland.

Kepel offers a categorisation of religious revival movements into top-bottom and bottom-top. The former usually attempt to monopolise the public sphere, reforming state structures and imposing religious laws on the whole society. Kepel's expertise in modern Islam and familiarity with Middle East politics help him to produce a brilliant account of religious movements in Israel and Iran, using their example to illustrate the potential of the top-bottom movements to develop a firm authority of religion over many spheres of public life. This is a relevant argument for the Polish case study: further chapters (notably Chapter 4) will argue that it was largely due to the top-bottom political and institutional changes and frameworks imposed by politicians in co-operation with the PRCC and other religious groups between 1989 and 1993 (such as the reform of educational laws) that helped religion to maintain its authority over Polish society.

On the other hand, the author uses Islamic resurgence in Egypt as an example of the bottom-top approach, which is focused on building communities and improving the functionalisation of religion. Kepel notes that Christian resurgence differs from that of Islam and Judaism, observing the divergent character of religious and state authorities within these religions. It is because of this bifurcation, Kepel claims, that there was no threat of a Christian equivalent of the Khomeini sweeping to power in any Christian society. He also attributes the different attitudes towards democracy to doctrinal differences between Abrahamic faiths, and not to social, cultural or political factors. This is an important addition to the previous models of secularisation/desecularisation, as it specifies that Christian faiths (such as Roman Catholicism) have less potential to produce theocratic regimes.

Juergensmeyer's *Terror in the Mind of God* (2000) focuses more on violent forms of religious extremism, and predicts an ever-rising role of religious movements in public life. His research methodology largely differs from Kepel's: Juergensmeyer takes a much more

ethnographic approach, interviewing leaders of various extremist groups, from Northern Ireland to Japan, presenting their rationales and analysing their actions and their consequences. Although violent religious extremism is not present in contemporary Poland, Juergensmeyer's account is useful in that it offers a number of observations on why religious movements decide to go public and actively oppose their enemies. This happens most often, Juergensmeyer claims, when the concerns of religious groups relating to this world are seen as equal to the cosmic struggle of good vs. evil, when believers identify themselves with the struggle they embark upon and when they feel that individual action can make all the difference in the conflicts they participate in. Juergensmeyer's proposed solution to violent clashes with and between religious groups relates to the secular majority. The author seems to believe that modern societies lack moral and spiritual values because of their secular character. Only a spiritual and religious revival in affected societies, and the increased presence of religion in public life, would limit violent conflict.

Juergensmeyer's considerations seem to contradict the reality of Poland's political life after 1989, where religious groups and organisations, particularly those with a more radical profile, such as the Radio Maryja Group and League of Polish Families, contributed to antagonising conflicts in the public sphere. The PRCC itself is often accused of stirring political conflict for the sake of securing its own interests, even if doing so endangers the stability of the political system. The case of the first presidential election in 1990, which saw the Church's involvement in an internal power struggle within the Solidarity movement resulting in the huge electoral success of the populist Stanisław Tymiński, is a good example of such meddling (see Chapter 4). And so we can say that the moral and spiritual values praised by Juergensmeyer do not seem to be the recipe for quenching political controversies in Poland, and many developments involving the PRCC's direct intrusion into politics point out to a completely opposite conclusion to his idealised theories.

## Republicisation

Herbert's republicisation thesis (2007, 2011) argues that the functionalisation of religion, combined with the protest character of religion and a breakdown in confidence in various forms of secularisation, accompanied by media de-regulation and commercialisation, favours the increased presence of religion in public life. Herbert's theory differs from deprivatisation in that it considers a context where religion was not necessarily subject to the privatisation process, and yet did not occupy a prominent place in social life. Using the example of modern Egypt and the functionalisation of Islam in health, education and welfare, amongst other areas of activity, Herbert suggests that social-differentiation processes can have an opposite effect on religious discourses to that predicted by secularisation theory. The rising influence of Islamic institutions on Egyptian society seems to counter the basic claim of classic secularisation theory: that social differentiation leads to the marginalisation of religion through modern functional systems. Herbert also argues that new media facilitate a wider dissemination of religious content, thus contributing to the intensification of religious presence in both private and public life. What is more, Herbert's thesis addresses the role religion and religious institutions play in 'secular' sphere such as education, politics or media, contending that this form of activity sustains increased public presence of religion. The republicisation thesis also makes an important distinction between the public visibility of religion and religious revival, claiming that religious republicisation can occur independently of (or even contrary to) changes in individual religiosity. This is particularly relevant in today's Poland, where individual religiosity rates are falling, but where the prevalence of religious content in politics and the strength of radical religious media multiply the public visibility of religion in society.

Fenn (1978) developed a non-linear typology of secularisation processes in his *Theory of Secularization*, distinguishing two concepts—‘mythical’ and ‘discursive’ thought—represented by consensus and conflict theories in sociological theory respectively. He then aligns himself with the latter, also represented by Weber and Bell, being a more ‘secularized, demythologized stage in (...) social theory’ (Fenn 1978:6). In this discursive paradigm, secularisation is a battle between those social actors who wish to expand the domain of the sacred and those who wish to restrict it. Five stages of the process are characterised by Fenn: (1) separation of distinct religious institutions and clergy; (2) sharpening borders between religious and secular realms; (3) developing generalised value systems and beliefs, potentially expressed in a civil religion; (4) gathering support for the religious-secular split; and (5) ensuring the separation of individual and corporate life. Fenn stresses the nonlinear and potentially reversible character of this model.

Fenn’s idea that secularisation is a result of the struggle between social forces is echoed by Smith (2005). Authors contributing to the ‘secular revolution’ contend that the historical secularisation of American public life is not a natural and inevitable process—a mere consequence of modernisation—as suggested by most previous scholars. Smith claims that secularisation in the US was an outcome of a struggle between conflicted interest groups attempting to control society. This claim is backed by a number of examples from the fields of education, science, public morality and human rights, and the patterns they have followed in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century America.

Smith proposes to ‘move agency, interests, power, resources, mobilization, strategy, and conflict to the foreground in our understanding of macrosocial secularization—a topic until now largely framed by abstract and agentless terms like “differentiation” and “rationalization”’ (Smith 2003:vii). Although revolutionary and innovative both in form and content, Smith’s theory quotes Chaves (1994), Dobbelaere (1981) and Sewell (1992) as its inspiration, as these

authors have suggested shifting the focus of secularisation theory from questions of belief to issues of authority, and insisted on the cultural construction of the nature of social structures. Smith further admits that his research was influenced by what he calls ‘certain postmodernist sensibilities’ (Smith 2003:viii) in the way that it is concerned with the postmodern critique of Enlightenment universalism as a potential window for intellectual and social pluralism.

One of the main values of Smith’s work lies in the clear defining process of his principal research categories of religion, revolution and public life. Smith views religion as not merely a set of cognitive beliefs or ethical imperatives, but as a way of life practiced by communities. Smith’s understanding of public life as antagonistic puts him in Habermas’s footsteps when referring to areas of social life in which culturally different groups of people co-exist, with common arrangements in areas such as law, education, science and media, amongst others. By using revolution as a central category for his thesis, Smith looks into the issues of power and authority, resource mobilisation and cultural and institutional transformation in American society. Smith’s theory is of high relevance to this thesis given that it focuses largely on institutions and vested interests and the non-linear character of secularisation processes. Although Smith’s book focuses largely on American Protestantism, it portrays many universal mechanisms that can be related to post-1989 Poland, as we shall see, notably in reference to the first period of Poland’s democratic transformation (1989-1993) and the subsequent years of consolidation of the place of religion in public life (1993-2007).

According to Smith, the secularisation of American public life may be understood as a revolutionary process. Before this ‘revolution’, Smith argues, an established—mainly Protestant—regime was in place, and its institutional privilege and dominance provoked increasing grievances among excluded groups, including secular groups, Catholic groups and other denominations. In response, these disenfranchised groups engaged in activities designed to rid the established regime of its social control. The anti-establishment insurgency, aided by a

number of outside forces and happenings, overthrew the established regime and installed a new order.

Smith contends that traditional secularisation theory suffers from seven theoretical defects. The first defect Smith points to is over-abstraction. Obscuring concrete social and political factors crucial to understanding the course of secularisation, such as specific historical actors and interests, means that they are not studied in depth by secularisation theorists. In a similar way, secularisation theory lacks an analysis of human agency: it offers transformation without protagonists, action without actors and historical processes without agents. As this thesis argues, the main actors in Poland's religious landscape—the PRCC and its interests—played, and continue to play, a crucial role in diverting the course of secularisation. Smith further charges that the classic secularisation theory presents an over-romanticised history of religion whereby the religious past is presented as a 'golden era', when individuals and communities were truly religious—a vision Smith rejects as a 'backward-looking utopia' (Martin 1969:30-31, 36).

Smith's theory, framing secularisation in terms of a power struggle between interested parties and focusing on institutions and interests, offers valuable insights for the study of post-communist Poland. This thesis argues that the current relationship between religion and public life in Poland is a result of the complex relationship between historical processes and actions taken by main actors such as the PRCC and political groups and institutions.

Furthermore, Smith's re-examination of the secularisation thesis is helpful in identifying the main processes influencing religious change in contemporary Poland, a country experiencing rapid modernisation. Differentiation, societalisation and rationalisation can all be observed on different levels of Polish social life. When it comes to public life, the two former processes have most relevance to the way in which religion's position is evolving. Differentiation within Polish society and the independent functioning of its different spheres, such as the economy and politics, have been accelerated by the collapse of communism, which limited the independent

functioning of different layers and groups within society, forcibly uniting them under the banner of real socialism.

## **Conclusion**

In post-1989 Poland, the construction of a modern, liberal, democratic polity characterised by the increasingly independent functioning of the state, political society and civil society posed new challenges to religion. From being forced into the private sphere, and only gradually re-emerging into public life since the 1960s, the Catholic Church has tried to find a new place in Poland's public and private life. However, accelerating differentiation has made it challenging for the Church to maintain a grip on all aspects of social life. At the same time, societalisation increasingly impeded the Church's involvement in and importance to the private life of Polish people. Increased social mobility and the break-up of traditional communities lowered the importance of everyday religious rituals and redefined the traditional role of the Church, no longer at the centre of the community. Last but not least, rationalisation processes diminished the Church's capacity to control certain debates. The abortion debate, for example, has expanded from religious arguments (abortion as a sin) to include rational and moral arguments (abortion as a human right and abortion as a form of killing).

As much as the modernisation processes have influenced the relationship between Church and state and reshaped the place of religion in public life, limiting the scope of this research to modernisation does not produce the required results, and obscures other important factors influencing secularisation processes. The main alternative approaches, such as the individualisation thesis, which define themselves against the secularisation thesis, expand the scope of analysis. Theories of privatisation and individualisation offer valuable alternatives to the secularisation thesis, proving that the public role and importance of religion can be separated

from the individual and private dimension of religion. Poland was subject to a partially forced privatisation of religion between 1944 and 1989. This artificial state of privatisation had profound implications for the role of the Catholic Church under communist rule (see Chapter 3), and for the ways in which religion then returned to public life after the Polish communist regime collapsed. Privatisation theory can be used to extrapolate a reversed process in post-1989 Poland. Polish individual and private religiosity has fallen steadily since 1989, yet religion remains highly visible in the public sphere, mainly through the actions of the Catholic Church and its allies in political society.

Deprivatisation theory, together with republicisation theory, complements the insights offered by individualisation and privatisation theories. It shows that processes of religious change are not only more complex than a simple trajectory of traditional/religious society transforming into a modern/secular society, but also that many trends of religious change can be reversed. After 44 years of communist rule, religion in Poland rapidly returned to the public sphere, and had to establish a place for itself. The Catholic Church, used to its unique role in the communist system as both the most important non-state institution and an opposition force, had to rapidly redefine that role in the conditions of democratic transformation. The fact that the communist authorities tried to force the Church out of the public arena, using a range of repressive methods, whilst also using the PRCC in pursuing their agenda, makes the process even more complex and dynamic. In June 1989, religion returned to Poland's public life almost overnight, taking everyone by surprise and drawing criticism from many directions. Casanova (1994) argues that new communication methods and the development of civil society can sustain religious deprivatisation, which in turn can lead to the kinds of increased tensions and criticisms of religion's public role that can be observed in today's Poland.

Herbert's republicisation thesis attempts to address the same process, but offers a different explanation of the causes and mechanisms involved in religion's increased public presence. Herbert points to the fact that disillusionment with different forms of secularisation



combined with de-differentiation of the sacred can contribute to religious republicisation. Quite importantly, the republicisation thesis contends that religion can maintain high visibility regardless of individual religiosity indicators, and looks at the activities of religious actors in secular spheres such as education or politics. As Poland was subject to a forced secularisation as a result of communist rule, the idea of a religiously neutral state is largely discredited. This has consequences for the place and role of religion in modern public life. The Catholic Church often attempts to undermine critiques of its public activities by referring to the communist period, where most public religious activities were forbidden. Furthermore, Polish public opinion is very sensitive to any radical attempts at limiting the activities of the Church, remembering its role in anti-communist opposition. Herbert (2007) also points out that the protest character of a given religion can contribute to sustaining its republicisation. The Polish Catholic Church tries to bridge its role as anti-communist opposition with that as the purported defender of Polish national identity in conditions of rapid westernisation that endanger traditional beliefs and values. This contributes to the increased mobilising potential of Catholicism in Poland: its power to promote forces of change and structural transformation, in line with the SMT theory presented in the previous chapter (use of motive, means and opportunity).

Theories of resurgence link very well with this concept in that they focus on the mobilising potential of religion and the rise of religiosity in conditions of modernisation. Although Poland is not experiencing an all-out religious revival—as noted, personal religiosity levels have been falling since the early 1990s—certain elements of religious mobilisation and resurgence can be observed, particularly with reference to radical and extremist groups within the Church, such as the aforementioned Radio Maryja and the League of Polish Families. This trend is also reaching out to touch mainstream political organisations, including Law and Justice, Poland's second political force since 2005.

Most of the above-mentioned theories focus on social changes and processes that are unintended, rather than on actions undertaken by individuals, groups, organisations and institutions. This is a departure from the original meaning of the term 'secularisation', which initially referred to the intentional and forced transfer of property and rights from religious to secular authorities. Only Fenn and Smith focus on the role and influence of actors and institutional interests in the secularisation process.

Smith's theory is thus of high relevance to this thesis as it proposes to focus on factors influencing secularisation largely ignored by others. Events unfolding in Poland's public square post-1989 show an intense ideological and discursive struggle between the more secular-oriented groups and institutions and those favouring the greater involvement of the Church and religion in public life. Smith suggests that the power balance between institutions taking part in this struggle, together with networks of interdependence and the interests of stakeholders, have decisive influence on the outcomes of the secularisation process. Rising opposition to the Church's involvement in politics, and little support for most policies addressed jointly by the Church and religious-minded groups and politicians, such as restrictive abortion laws, religious education in public schools and religious influence on political parties' programmes and policies, mean that a large number of Church hierarchs and politicians continue their alliance, over the heads of the electorate and in defiance of public opinion. The next chapter will look at the history of religion, state and national identity in Poland before 1989, assessing the importance of the links between religious and state institutions for the place of religion in public life, and setting the background for the further study of post-communist reality in chapters 4 and 5.

### Chapter 3: Religion in Poland before 1989

The previous chapter looked at various theoretical models of Church and state, focusing especially on the framework of religious presence in the public sphere. This chapter has greater specificity, being devoted to the historical relationship between Church, state, religion and politics in Poland since the Middle Ages. The main aim of the chapter is to present the complex background of contemporary relations between religion and public life in Poland, preceding a more detailed analysis of more recent developments in this relationship. The histories of Polish Christianity, Polish nationality and statehood are largely intertwined, and this is reflected in the structure of this chapter. Particular attention is paid to the emergence of national-religious identity in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Poland and the place of religion in the public realm in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: notably the changing reality of foreign domination (until 1918), brief independence (1918-39), and war and communist rule (1939-89). The main arguments presented in this chapter pertain to these strong historical links between the national and religious identity of Poles, as well as to the strong public presence of the Church, particularly in the last two centuries, both under foreign occupation and during a brief period of inter-war independence. I argue that the close links developed between the Catholic Church and the Polish national struggle in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, together with the Church's strong role in the reborn Polish republic existing between 1918-1939 and the PRCC's unique contribution under the communist regime (including both collaboration and collusion with the authorities), have had profound consequences for Poland's contemporary politics. In post-war Poland, the Church, despite persecution by the state, secured most of its institutional interests, and often co-operated with both the communist government and opposition movements, thus securing a unique position in the transformation period after 1989 (an issue which will be further discussed in Chapter 4).

## Religion and Polish nationhood

The history of Polish Christianity goes back to the Middle Ages. The second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century was crucial to the formation of the religious and national identity of what was to become the Polish nation. Most historians agree that the year 966, when Poland officially accepted Christianity, marked a defining moment in Poland's history (Kłoczowski 2000). The emergence of Christianity as the dominant faith in Poland was rapidly politicised, and was closely associated with the ruling classes. Even though the foundations of the Polish state are strongly associated with Christianity, and particularly with Catholicism, the country enjoyed a certain degree of religious freedom in the earliest centuries of its existence, and was home to representatives of many faiths. In the late 11<sup>th</sup> century, Jews from other Central-Eastern European lands began settling in Polish cities. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, as many as three-quarters of the world's Jews found a home in Poland (Sanford 1994:79). Other religious communities, such as Armenians and Muslims, were also present in Poland after the formation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1596. Poland was also the first principally Roman Catholic state within Europe to have a significant Orthodox community: the Orthodox Church had been present within Poland and Lithuania since the Great Schism in 1054 (Przybył 2001).

This long tradition of pluralism and inter-faith co-existence was put to the test during the volatile years of foreign invasions in 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century Poland. This is when, under conditions of threat and sudden change, the Roman Catholic faith began to establish itself as the principal body holding the nation together, and as a symbol of resistance to foreign oppression. The so-called 'Swedish Deluge' of 1655 threatened the very core of Poland's existence, when Swedish armies ravaged Polish territory; this was when the hitherto underlying threat of partition between neighbouring powers first emerged. At the height of their military campaign, the Swedes besieged the Częstochowa Monastery, where the revered icon of the Black Madonna was kept. To their surprise, the Swedish army was forced into a humiliating

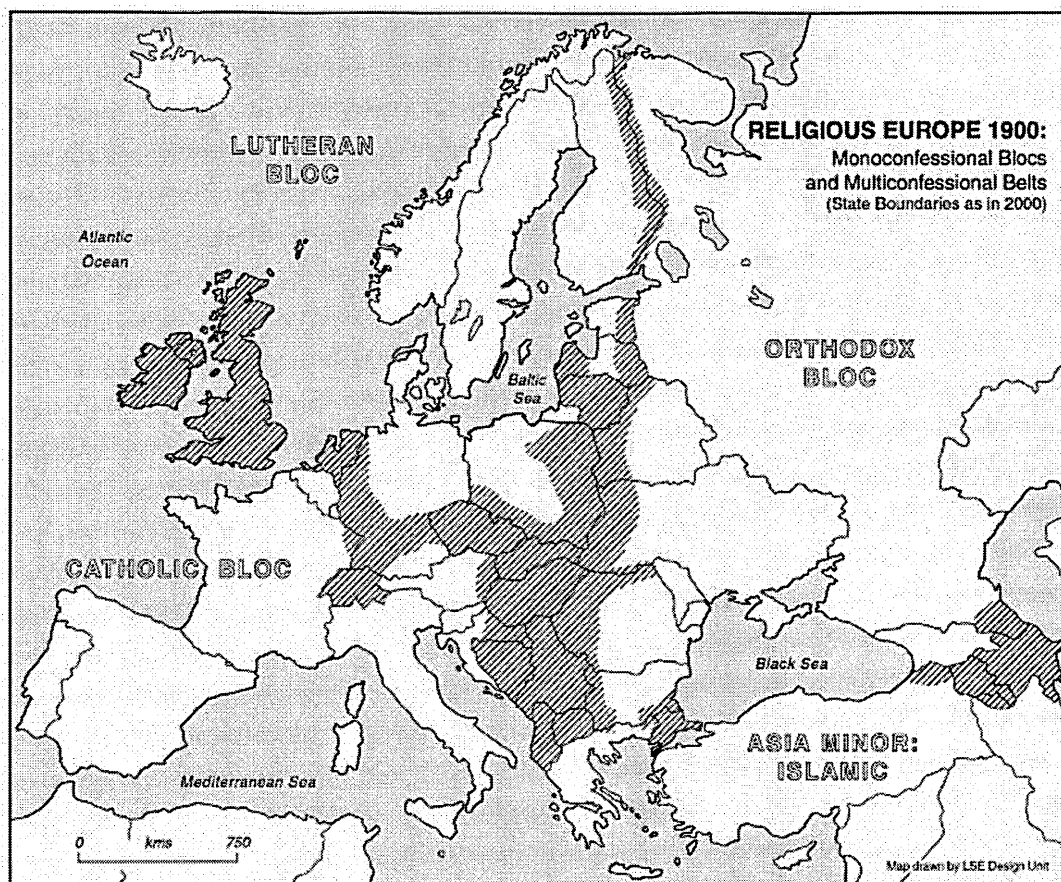
retreat by a small number of Polish knights and monks. The 'Defence of Częstochowa' entered Polish national history and collective memory as a myth affirmed by the vow of King John Casimir Vasa in Lviv, made in 1656 (the 'Lviv vows'), to dedicate the nation to the Virgin Mary, along with his promise to raise a church to commemorate the victory. The repercussions of this vow resounded in Polish politics into the present day. The Great Novena, a major public campaign devised by Primate Wyszyński in the 1950s and 1960s (see below), relied partially on the myth of the 'Defence of Częstochowa' and the Polish king's vow to entrust the Virgin Mary with protecting the Polish nation. Further references to the 17<sup>th</sup>-century events became a cause of a major political controversy after the 2005 parliamentary elections, when the Law and Justice government decided to co-finance the Church's wish to build a church in commemoration of the Lviv vows (see Chapter 5).

The Polish-Catholic union crystallised and flourished during the partition period (1789-1918). The joint action undertaken by Austria, Prussia and Russia deprived Poles of an independent state for over a century, and the Roman Catholic Church was faced with intolerance and significant persecution where the partitioning powers were non-Catholic (Protestant/German or Orthodox/Russian). This provoked a religious and patriotic reaction from the Polish people, and strengthened the links between religious (Catholic) and national identity in the Russian-occupied partition zone. The situation was substantially different in the Austrian-occupied zone. Some authors (Crankshaw 1983) suggest that Austria was a reluctant participant in the dismemberment of the Polish state, and only decided to join to prevent Russia and Prussia from threatening the balance of power in Central and Eastern Europe. Indeed, Polish language, culture and religion enjoyed extraordinary protected status in the Austrian zone, and Poles were able to participate in the political and social life of the country, and were even granted a contingent of seats in the national parliament in Vienna (Davies 2005).

The continued oppression of Polish cultural and religious (i.e. Catholic) rights in the Russian and Prussian zones boosted the national-religious identity of the divided Polish nation.

It reinforced the position of the Roman Catholic Church as the advocate of national liberation, and thus of all Poles. Indeed, traditional political or social divisions within the ethnic Polish community lost their primary importance in the struggle for national liberation. Nationalists and social democrats, liberals and conservatives, elites and peasantry alike all rallied around the Church during the partition period.

For four generations, Poland's national identity developed under conditions akin to a 'fortress under siege' (Doktór 1999: 178), and thus a unity between Catholicism and ethnic Polishness was forged. Lack of identification with the state during the partition period (caused by the fact that most Poles felt that they do not belong in the partition states) consolidated the firm relationship between religious and national values, as a result of which both the Catholic faith and the Church as an institution became icons of national importance (Tazbir 1996). This process occurred in a social reality where Catholic Poles were not a majority: the territories comprising the former Kingdom of Poland were still multicultural and multi-faith. As late as 1900, most of the territories of what was to become the second Polish republic were considered 'multiconfessional' (see Map 1 below; Madeley 2003:28).



**Map 1: Religious Europe 1900 (Madeley 2003)**

The new Polish state, which emerged after partition in 1918 as a result of the realignment of borders of European states after World War I, has been described as ‘a coat of many colours’ (Rothschild 1993:40). By 1921, the new state had a population of around 27,000,000, of which 69.2% were ethnic Poles, 14.3% Ukrainians and Ruthenians, 7.8% Jews and 3.9% Germans (Rothschild 1993:41). This overall diversity had many repercussions in different regions of the country, as well as internationally. Poland was home to the largest Jewish Diaspora in the world: approximately a third of all Jews. In the east of the country, Orthodox Belarusians and Ukrainians comprised the majority of the rural population, while their landlords were mostly Catholic Poles. In the biggest cities, however, Jews and Germans owned large amounts of real estate, whilst Poles were very often tenants or labourers (Rothschild 1993).

Urban-rural and majority-minority tensions were exacerbated by religious divisions. Strong links with rural communities have always been a characteristic feature of Polish Catholicism. Feudal, and then agrarian systems created the specific conditions for mass religiosity and the centrality of religion in social life. In rural communities, the parish became the basic structure around which community life evolved. In the newly created state, local Church officials often enjoyed a power and esteem higher than that of certain state officials by virtue of the forces of continuity and tradition (Pomian-Srzednicki 1982). It was this mark of continuity that strengthened the Church's role in Polish national identity. The strong links between Polish ethnicity and Catholicism were also sanctioned by the strong institutional support rendered to the Catholic Church by Polish authorities. The 1921 constitution guaranteed the Catholic Church a special status among the country's religious institutions:

The Roman Catholic faith, being the religion of the great majority of the nation, occupies a leading place in the state among other religions enjoying equal rights. The Roman Catholic Church is governed by its own laws. The relationship between the State and the Church will be agreed through a treaty with the Holy See, to be ratified by the *Sejm*.

(*Constitution* 1921: Article 114)

In 1925, Poland signed the above-mentioned treaty (the Concordat) with the Holy See, thus regulating the relations between the largest religious institution in the country and the state. According to the document, bishops, clergy and all members of the Church were assured free contact with the Vatican, and members of the clergy were assured legal protection when performing their official duties; the property rights of all clerics were also guaranteed by the state. Religious education was made obligatory in all public schools (except higher education), and Church authorities had the right to supervise it (Konkordat 1925).



In addition to the official support that the Polish Roman Catholic Church enjoyed from the early years of the Second Republic,<sup>9</sup> many lay-Catholic organisations, media and political parties supported the Church's attempts to dominate public life. The Polish Roman Catholic media presented the regaining of independence as the 'resurrection' of a Catholic nation, linking it to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century concept of Poland as the Christ of nations that had been developed and supported by romantic poets and writers, the Church hierarchy and many prominent Polish politicians (Kowalczykova 1991). This rhetoric was complemented by attempts to represent Poland as a mono-confessional state, and to marginalise the role of ethnic and religious minorities. The right-wing national democrats (*endeks*) became the Church's staunchest allies on the political scene. *Endeks* managed to influence the public debate on issues of religion and cultural diversity by a range of means, not all of which were legal. The first president of the Republic, Gabriel Narutowicz, a candidate popular among ethnic and religious minorities, was assassinated by one of the *endecja* supporters only five days into his presidency (Modras 2004). Cases of Church officials intervening in areas of government policy and civil rights were not unusual.

The brief period of relative religious freedom, and the attempted dominance of the mainstream religious community (i.e. Roman Catholicism) between 1918 and 1939, had profound implications for future developments in the fields of religion and politics in Poland and, for our purposes, the inter-war period offers the only point of reference to issues of modern church-state relations in independent Poland, largely because they were followed by decades of occupation and foreign control. Many aspects of the post-1989 transformation that will be described in chapters 4 and 5, such as the alliance of right-wing political forces and the Church, were related to the Second Republic, hence its relevance to further parts of this thesis.

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<sup>9</sup> The first Republic ended in 1795 with partition among Russia, Prussia and Austria; post-1989 Poland is referred to as the Third Republic.

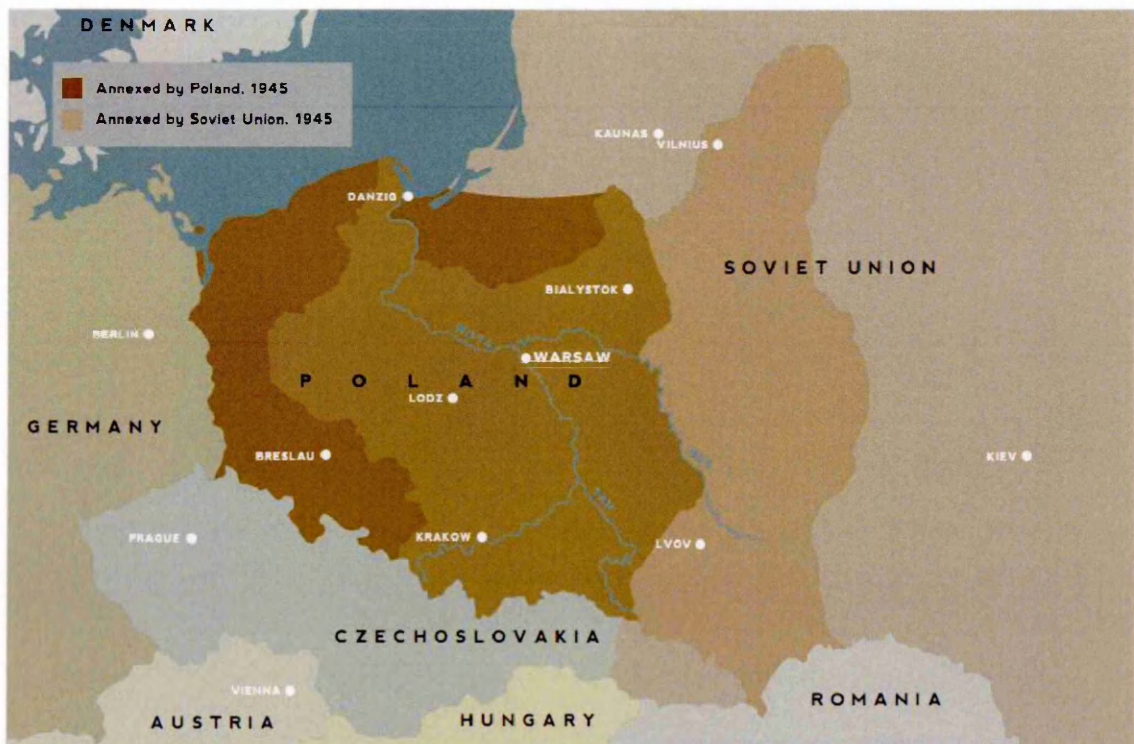
The short life of the Second Republic was marked by political and social conflicts that affected all classes and ethnic groups. The early attempts at building a democratic society, the authoritarian rule of the military after the 1926 coup and the tensions in relations with Poland's neighbours in the late 1930s were all but a prelude to the much more violent and tragic occurrences of the Second World War.

## **World War II and the new social and political landscape**

The Second World War, which began with the German invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939, understandably had a profound impact on the social landscape of the country that was to resonate for decades to come. Not only did the country's population suffer greatly, but the political and administrative structure collapsed entirely and was replaced by parameters established by two occupying powers (Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union). The institution of post-war borders was to redefine the country's position both within Europe and worldwide (see Map 2).

All denominations and religious institutions suffered dramatically with the onset of war, and the religious composition of the country was irreversibly changed. The predominant collective victim of the oppression of World War II was of course the country's Jewish population. Following the Nazi invasion, persecution and extermination led to over 3,000,000 Polish Jews (90% of the pre-war population) losing their lives. A community that had been an important part of Polish society for over eight-hundred years, and which had constituted almost 10% of the pre-1939 population (in many cases forming the elite of the most prominent social and professional groups, such as lawyers, doctors or craftsmen), was totally destroyed. The Holocaust wiped out the largest non-Christian religious community in the country (Piotrowski 1997).

Other ethnic and religious groups, such as Orthodox and Uniate Ukrainians, Belarusians and Protestant Germans, although spared the suffering of their Jewish compatriots, did not find a place in the new, post-1945 Poland. The reasons for this were complex. First of all, the Potsdam Conference of July 1945 completely reshaped Poland's borders. Large swathes of the eastern provinces of the Second Republic were incorporated into the Ukrainian and Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republics, and with them the large majority of the country's pre-war Ukrainian and Belarusian population. Although Poland lost 46 % of its pre-war territory in the east, it was 'compensated' by the Allies with large portions of former German lands, among them Pomerania, Lower and Upper Silesia in the west, Danzig in the north and East Prussia in the north-east. Second, the territorial restructuring was complemented by the large-scale forced migration of Ukrainians and Belarusians eastwards, and of Poles and Germans westwards, to ensure the maximum cohesion between state and ethnic boundaries, in line with Stalinist national policy (Conquest 1991).



**Map 2: Pre-1939/post-1945 Poland map (PBS 2010)**

Although minority groups and religions were the primary victims of both Nazi and Soviet actions, the majority of the population, together with their religious institutions—primarily the Polish Roman Catholic Church—also suffered a great deal during the war years. In territories that were directly annexed by the Reich (i.e. in western Poland), Polish Catholics were refused the right to use their mother tongue during church services. Catholic Action, one of the most important lay Catholic organisations, was dissolved, as were many associations linked to the PRCC. Many priests and bishops were imprisoned and taken to concentration camps; some of them were forced to move to the General Government area (Nazi-occupied central Poland, separate from the Reich). A wide-ranging anti-Church programme included the abolition of the bishops' administration, theological colleges and monasteries, leading to the eventual collapse of parish life—which significantly weakened local communities (Cywiński 1982).

The Vatican took an ambivalent stance in relation to the new status of occupied Polish territories. In December 1939, Pope Pius XII entrusted the administration of the Chełmno diocese in northern Poland to the German Bishop of Danzig, and appointed another German bishop as Apostolic Administrator for the Archdiocese of Gniezno and Poznań in central Poland, with jurisdiction over Germans living in the archdiocese. These actions were met with marked objections from the exiled Polish government and its embassy in the Vatican. Polish officials insisted that the Pope's actions violated the 1925 Concordat, by allowing a bishop resident outside of Poland's pre-1939 frontiers to control a part of Polish territory (Piekarski 1978). The communist provisional government in 1945 used this fact to declare the Concordat void (see below).

The situation in the General Government area was relatively better, although far from normal. The local clergy supported underground, anti-Nazi opposition movements, and the hierarchy reported on the situation on the ground back to the Vatican. Many priests and monks decided to support the anti-Nazi resistance directly, by joining the various partisan organisations

as chaplains, teachers or editors of the underground press, and a number of priests and nuns assisted the Jewish population in fleeing Nazi persecution (Dudek and Gryz 2006).

Poland's eastern provinces, which changed hands frequently between 1939 and 1945, were to suffer most during the war. In the Soviet-occupied Vilnius province, police arrested dozens of local priests for 'anti-state activities' between 1939 and 1941. Soviet occupation resulted in a quick and brutal atheisation campaign. Church property was confiscated and churches and theological colleges closed, and the Church was banned from contacting the Vatican. Religious instruction in schools was abolished. Nuns working in hospitals and monasteries were expelled; some of them continued their charitable work in hiding. Many ordinary citizens were victims of forced migration to Siberia and other areas of the Soviet Union for their declared religious affiliation. Priests often asked to accompany the faithful on their journeys (Cywiński 1982).

Between 1941 and 1944, wherever the area was occupied by Germans the situation only became worse. Those involved in resistance were murdered without trial. Church property was also confiscated without justification. The return of the Red Army to eastern Poland in 1945 was marked by frequent murders of priests and robberies of churches and monasteries. The Uniate Church, active in the territories of south-east Poland (today's Ukraine), was an object of a particularly vicious campaign as a 'foreign' element on Orthodox soil. In March 1945, the Soviet authorities presented Uniates with an ultimatum: they must abolish their union with the Vatican and convert to Orthodoxy. The lack of a response resulted in the arrests of high-ranking Greek Catholic Church officials, including Bishop Slipyj and the staff of the seminary. Later on, the Soviets forced the remaining clergy to organise a synod in Lvov, during which it was decided that the Uniate Church should join the Orthodox Church (Cywiński 1982).

The pre-war Polish Roman Catholic Church had over 10,000 registered priests and monks. Over one-fifth of them, including five bishops, perished in the war. It was the bloodiest episode in the history of the Polish Church over all the centuries of its existence. The Catholic

Church contributed to the defence of national identity, and provided spiritual and physical support in times of duress. The end of military activities brought a positive change in all possible ways. It did not, however, bring the long-awaited peace and social stability expected by both the Church hierarchy and the general population. It also completely changed the dynamics of relations between religion, society and public life for over four decades, as the new communist authorities had very specific plans regarding the place of religion in social life.

### **Early post-war years: reconnaissance in force (1944-1948)**

Clearly, post-war Poland could not have resembled its pre-war self. An enormous change in the social, political and economic environment caused by war brought about substantial changes in the state of Polish religion in general, and Polish Catholicism in particular. This was a period of forced secularisation, initially instituted by a foreign power but implemented by the hands of Polish communists.

There was now reduced diversity in Poland: there were just over 100,000 Jews, 300,000 Protestants and another 100,000 Old Catholics (a branch of Catholicism), plus representatives of other denominations and non-believers. 96% of the post-war Polish population was Roman Catholic (Kłoczowski 2000). Centuries of inter-ethnic co-existence and multi-faith social reality in Poland had come to an abrupt end. And in addition to the geographic, demographic and ethnic changes, the new Polish state was soon about to experience one of the most brutal and austere political regimes: Soviet communism.

The basis of the new regime was the Polish Committee of National Liberation ('Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego', PKWN), which was established by the Soviets in July 1944. The PKWN swiftly rejected the 1935 constitution as 'fascist and illegal' (Rosada and Gwóźdź 1955:165), and declared the 1921 constitution the only valid legal document to govern the

country in the new reality. Despite the formal validity of the constitution, the communist authorities ruled the country arbitrarily, particularly whilst the anti-German offensive was still in place (the war ended officially on May 9 1945), and no national or international body was able to put a check on the communists' actions.

The arbitrary character of the new regime and the selective application of pre-war rules and laws can be illustrated by the communists' treatment of religion and religious communities during the first years of their rule in Poland. Although generally anti-religious, Polish communists left a very mixed record of church-state relations in the first years of their grip on power.

The Soviet rule was based on Marxist-Leninist political theories, which asserted that religion is the opium for the masses and a diversion from the people's earthly duties, including the foremost of them: communist revolution. According to the Marxist-Leninists, religion impedes proletarian revolution by teaching people to accept their situation as it is, thus making them passive subjects. Additionally, Soviet Marxists believed that religion is a tool of the bourgeois ruling classes that allows them to delude the masses and force them into a life of misery. Under revolutionary socialism, religion must therefore disappear, and inevitably would do so, according to the Soviets.

It must be noted that Polish communism, although carefully supervised by the Kremlin, was largely different from what was happening in Soviet Union itself. The initial period of rapid communist power-grabbing and the consolidation of all state and social institutions was ended by Khrushchev's post-1956 Thaw, showing that Polish society was not prone to Sovietisation. As this thesis focuses primarily on the presence of religion in the public arena, the communist anti-religious and anti-Church policies will be reviewed only briefly, in order to illustrate the changing character of state limitations on the public presence of religion.

After coming to power, the Polish communist government promptly started adjusting social reality to its own doctrine, along the lines of orthodox Marxist-Leninist thought. The first

months of provisional communist government were marked by both suspicion of and curiosity (of the government) about the loyalty of the Church towards the new rulers of the country, and its potential to mobilise the faithful. Nevertheless, in September 1944, religion was reinstated into school curricula, and the Catholic University of Lublin ('Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski', KUL) was allowed to re-open. Local offices of the 'Caritas' charitable organisation were installed, and Church dignitaries, such as Archbishop Sapieha, were invited to state ceremonies. The reason for this was simple: it was a planned policy aimed at using the PRCC as a support structure in legitimising the new order in the eyes of the population, as the communists had little popular credibility. The newly acquired western and northern provinces of communist Poland, granted by the allies at the Yalta conference and emptied by the rushed evacuation of Germans, had to be quickly repopulated. The communists recognised that this relatively new and unknown ground could be more easily 'conquered' when the newly established communities were accompanied by a priest—hence the authorities' attempts at courting the clergy.

In order to boost this new policy, the government allowed for the establishment of a liberal Catholic weekly newspaper, the *Tygodnik Powszechny* ('General Weekly'), the first edition of which was published in Krakow in March 1945. Other Catholic weeklies, such as *Tygodnik Warszawski* ('Warsaw Weekly'), *Głos Niedzielnny* ('The Sunday Voice') and *Głos Katolicki* ('The Catholic Voice'), were also allowed to operate and publish freely. By 1948, as many as 70 local and national Catholic publications were in print, and their circulation accounted for 11% of all the print media in the country (Stefaniak 1998).

At the same time, however, a brutal and ruthless terror campaign swept across the country, targeting 'enemies of the people': mostly right-wing resistance fighters and those supporting them, but including anybody loosely connected with the underground Polish state and the Home Army (the biggest underground resistance organisation during the Second World War). Armed groups of communist soldiers fought the remaining anti-communist opposition, and the authorities arrested, tortured and executed hundreds and thousands of their political



opponents. This included those involved in the Church, exposing the hypocrisy at the heart of the communist regime. Priests and Church officials, particularly those in the service of the Home Army, were among the victims of torture and targets of political assassination. Clerics trying to enter the legal political life of the new country—even at a local level—were targeted by the communist security apparatus. According to some historians, up to a thousand priests may have been tortured and imprisoned in the aftermath of the war on account of their political views (Myszor 1992; Żaryn 1997).

This new oppression of the Church bled into the political sphere. As early as December 1944, the PKWN abolished the pre-war religious oath for civil servants and replaced it with a secular one (Piekarski 1979). This clearly shows how important bureaucracy was to the secular ‘clergy’—i.e. communist administrators—of the new regime. September 1945 saw the abolition of church wedding ceremonies, now rendered invalid under state law. In September 1945, the Provisional Government declared the 1925 Concordat void, justifying this measure by arguing that the Vatican had previously violated it during the war by favouring Germany (see the appointment of German bishops on Polish territories, described above). Although Pope Pius XI later explained his actions in a letter to the Polish bishops, justifying them by asserting the need for the faithful of both nationalities to be assisted in times of war, the communists did not take his argument into account. Anti-Catholic measures continued apace: although religious instruction was initially allowed back into public schools in 1944, Catholics faced more and more obstacles to securing regular lessons for their children in public schools.

Starting in 1945, when the war had come to an end and the allied powers had agreed at Yalta on the post-war European political order, the Polish communist authorities launched a more coherent, although still moderate (compared with post-1948 campaigns), anti-religious and anti-Church initiative. The main pillars of this policy included: a restrictive approach to religious activity in the public sphere; pragmatic use of religious organisations for the benefit of authorities; and a limit on the international links of religious organisations, with a view to

creating a national Church. The symptoms of the restrictive approach, which were already present in the immediate post-1944 period, have already been described above. As before, the public face masked systematic oppression. The authorities allowed for the presence and functioning of religious organisations; so, for example, the Polish Ecumenical Council was reactivated in October 1945. The Congregation of Jewish Communities also functioned freely from 1946. But this did not mean that public displays of religious allegiance or the political activism of religious figures were tolerated. For example, Catholic Action, banned under Nazi occupation, did not gain the state's permission to resume activities. The activities of other pro-Church parties were also successfully boycotted. In August 1945, the National Party ('Stronnictwo Narodowe', SN) attempted to legalise its status, but instead its leaders were arrested by the security apparatus. The Labour Party ('Stronnictwo Pracy', SP), a pre-war Christian-democrat group, managed to register as a legal organisation, but, since its activities were permanently controlled by the communists, it was decided to dissolve it after just one year of functioning. In 1947, an attempt was made by the 'Warsaw Weekly' magazine to draw former SN and SP supporters together; the new group, however, included supporters of the pre-war Christian-democrat and nationalist heritage, and so it was met with a prompt and decisive response from the authorities, and the main protagonists were arrested (Stefaniak 1998).

The only political groups that were allowed to operate were those that pledged allegiance to the new regime. Bolesław Piasecki's *Dziś i Jutro* ('Today and Tomorrow') weekly magazine and PAX—the Polish Progressive Catholic Movement—are both very good examples of the pragmatic, utilitarian and cynical use of religious movements by the communists. Piasecki, a pre-war Polish fascist and a supporter of Polish-German co-operation against the USSR, was captured by the Russians in 1944. He managed to persuade them that his popularity in post-war Poland could serve the communist cause. The communists decided to capitalise on this, and entrusted him with the task of organising pro-communist lay-Catholic circles. 'Today and Tomorrow' thus proved useful: it became a starting point for the establishment of a national

organisation that fully complied with the communist desire to build a socialist state allied with the USSR. For its part, PAX was, despite its name, essentially involved in publishing pro-regime books, newspapers and periodicals. In return, the state offered the organisation licences for a range of activities, such as running a high-school and setting up a business arm called INCO-Veritas, which produced religious artefacts, cleaning products and even fishing nets. The PAX empire was also involved in the creation of other organisations for lay Catholics and clergy, such as the Peace Defenders' Movement ('Ruch Obrońców Pokoju'; ROP), amongst others (Grajewski 1999). This policy of creating pro-regime organisations that purportedly represented some religious groups within the society was continued throughout the whole communist period, as the authorities could not get the PRCC to officially collaborate with the government, and yet they sought some legitimisation from religious groups.

Another pillar of the state's early policy directed against the Church consisted of strong anti-Vatican rhetoric and activities, typified by their annulling the 1925 Concordat and ignoring the Vatican's plea to spare the Uniate Church from persecution; as always, this stance was ambivalent, and contrasted by a moderate attitude to the PRCC and even an attempt to involve the Polish Church in building the new order. It may well have been that the Polish communists intended to draw the PRCC away from its superiors in Rome in an attempt to create a national Catholic Church, similar to the Russian Orthodox Church, which would have remained under Soviet control. Whether this was the aim of the government or not, it failed completely, and the Vatican remained in close contact with the PRCC.

The communist authorities' last step on a long and bloody march to power was the organisation of national elections that were supposed to confirm the democratic legitimacy of the new regime. The decision to organise them came only in 1947, when all political opponents had been neutralised and most anti-communist resistance groups had been eliminated. The Church did not remain neutral in the face of what was basically a rigged election. It instructed Catholic voters not to vote for parties representing the communist coalition, as its programme

was based on Marxism-Leninism, and its secular-materialistic premises were not compatible with the teachings of the Catholic Church. *Tygodnik Powszechny* called on all Catholics to vote 'only for those persons, electoral lists and programmes that are not in opposition to Catholic teachings and morality' (Piekarski 1978:90).

Despite the unusual involvement of the PRCC in the electoral campaign, and the influence it tried to exercise on the voting behaviour of its members, however, the Democratic Bloc won a landslide victory, with over 80% support, obtaining virtually absolute political power in the newly elected *Sejm* (the lower chamber of the Polish parliament). The election results were undeniably manipulated with the help of government ministries and civil servants, and numerous breaches of the electoral code were reported, but this did not stop the victorious parties from swiftly assuming power. In December 1948, after another round of political purges and monopolisation of power, the Polish United Workers' Party (later 'the Party' or PZPR) was created—a political institution that would wield absolute power until the end of communist rule in Poland in June 1989. These developments equipped the ruling regime with new weapons in their struggle for a communist Poland (now named 'People's Republic of Poland', 'Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa', PRL), and new forms of political oppression were soon to emerge. These included the state's religious policy and its activities in relation to the PRCC as the biggest non-state organisation in the country (making the PRCC a double target: as a large organisation, and as a religious one). Subsequent steps taken by the communist authorities between 1948 and 1956 were to further exacerbate the difficult position of the Church.

### **Strengthening the communist monopoly: 1948-56**

Immediately after the 'democratic' victory of 1947, the communist authorities doubled their efforts to monopolise all spheres of social life in the country by establishing communist

institutions and building a totalitarian state. The aims of the Stalinist offensive were twofold: first of all, building a united front of communist institutions, governed centrally and acting unanimously in executing state policy; second, controlling all possible areas of public life—including the religious sphere—and infiltrating the biggest religious institution, the PRCC.

Youth was identified as a key target group for communist control, particularly as young people most actively showed their support for Church and clergy. Local and regional administration was instructed to harass and intimidate members of pro-Catholic associations and groups, as well as to encourage them to join the official communist youth organisations, such as the Union of Polish Youth ('Związek Młodzieży Polskiej', ZMP). Night office-raids, refusals to register new organisations and the dissolution of existing ones became more and more frequent. Religious instruction was gradually forced out of state schools and moved into churches and parish offices. New 'atheist' schools started operating, often under the patronage of the newly created Childrens' Friends' Society ('Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Dzieci', TPD). This society's purported independent status was indeed a cover for an institution financed entirely by the Ministry of Education. In addition, by 1949 priests had been removed from state hospitals, where they had served as chaplains. Now, key institutions—education, health and the third sector (civil society organisations)—were freed from PRCC influence.

The drive to limit the power of the Church did not stop at rooting out its links with other state institutions. All priests were subject to invigilation and intense scrutiny by the security apparatus as a matter of course. Since 1947, the authorities had started profiling the clergy and dividing them into 'positive' and 'reactionary' (*pozytywne* and *reakcyjne*) forces, as part of a wider strategy of infiltrating and dividing the Church from the inside in order to weaken and eventually destroy it. The state Office of Security ('Urząd Bezpieczeństwa', UB) opened case files for all members of the clergy, collecting intelligence data—including compromising materials—about priests and Church leaders. Trials of clergy and even nuns became more and more widespread. Some were punished for disseminating underground materials and providing shelter to fugitive

oppositionists; others for preaching about the abuses of power on the part of the communist government, and inveighing against its hostile attitude towards religion, the Church and the Vatican (Żaryn 2003:92-93).

Even though the authorities officially avoided declaring war on religion and the Church, and punished those who publicly declared that communism destroys the Church (in order not to antagonise the general population), the anti-PRCC and anti-Vatican campaign intensified through 1949 and early 1950. One of the most striking manifestations of the new approach to religion was the centralisation of the anti-Church campaign in the hands of an inter-agency committee established by the Political Bureau of PZPR in January 1949. Before that, fighting the Church and religion in general public life was the domain of a range of state institutions, including the Office of Security, Ministry of Public Security, regional authorities and the Communist Party, amongst others. The newly established committee devised a coherent plan to limit the Church's outreach into society, including judicial actions (show trials of the clergy), educational actions (such as abolishing Catholic schooling and closing social science and humanities departments at the Catholic University of Lublin) and financial measures (such as taxing Church property and confiscating Church property in the former German territories in the north and west of the country).

The summer of 1949 saw a further deterioration in church-state relations, mainly caused by two high-profile events. In early July, the faithful at the Lublin cathedral reported that a Virgin Mary icon wept tears. News quickly spread across the region and the country. State officials dismissed the event as a superstition and an attempt by the Church to deceive its followers. The local church was then closed, and the bishop was asked to issue a statement firmly proclaiming that miracles do not exist; on refusing, he was arrested, and the press embarked on a nationwide campaign ridiculing the whole affair (Żaryn 1997).

Dramatic though it was, this event was quickly overshadowed by the government's reaction to the Vatican's declaration condemning Marxism and all supporters of communist

parties in Western Europe. The communist government accused the Church of intolerance and anti-state sentiment, and further intensified its anti-PRCC campaign. Between August 1949 and January 1950, all Church-run hospitals and Catholic associations were shut. In January 1950, the state confiscated the property of Caritas, the biggest charity organisation run by the Church. Its property was seized, bank accounts frozen, and staff fired, evicted from offices or arrested. This was done despite the substantial material and financial support that Polish society received from Caritas's international supporters. A puppet board was elected at Caritas, consisting of 'patriot-priests' and representatives of Bolesław Piasecki's PAX, in order to legitimise the seizures (Żaryn 1997).

The liquidation of Caritas was but a prelude to the largest anti-Church operation to date, which was implemented in February and March of 1950. First, a nationwide structure bringing together 'patriot-priests' in support of the communist regime was established (despite the earlier dissolution of other Catholic organisations). The notorious Main Commission of Priests ('Główna Komisja Księży', GKK) was generously supported by the state through financial incentives (building materials for new churches, tax exemptions and the conferral of real estate, amongst other things) and licences to publish newspapers. In March, the government issued a decree entitled 'On the takeover by the State of mortmain properties', declaring that all real estate property belonging to religious institutions (other than GKK) would be taken over by the state. The Council of Ministers had the privilege of deciding which categories of confiscated property would remain under the Church's management, and which would be taken away permanently or transferred to another (presumably pro-regime) religious organisation (Concordat Watch 2009).

The communists' clampdown on Church activity forced the Church hierarchy to seek a compromise with the authorities. In April 1950, a joint PRCC-state commission worked on a *modus vivendi* agreement, which was signed on April 14 in Krakow. It referred to a number of issues vital to the further existence and operation of the PRCC, as well as the Church's place in

the public realm. The Church vowed to support a number of state policies, including encouraging Catholics to 'restore the country and increase the well-being of the Nation' as well as to oppose 'anti-Polish and revisionist manifestations' of the German clergy (Concordat Watch 2009).

The agreement was widely hailed in the communist press and media as a success for the government and proof of an ever-strengthening socialist state. The Episcopate instructed priests to present the document as a moderate success, and as an opportunity for the Church to maintain as much independence and freedom as possible in order to continue supporting the nation morally and charitably (Piekarski 1978).

It seems that, at this stage, the PRCC decided to abandon the strategy of unilateral opposition to the communist authorities in favour of a more accommodating stance. At the same time, the communist authorities started to understand that it would be very difficult for them to completely eradicate the Church's influence on society, even though the new government now had an absolute grip on all state institutions—including legislative and judiciary branches. The impasse resulting from the growing strength of the communist authorities, mostly a consequence of institutional arrangements and Soviet support, not popular following, and consistent resistance from the Church and the faithful, forced both sides to compromise in some of their beliefs and adjust their positions to accommodate each other. This was a situation of mutual loss and mutual benefit. The Church secured relative independence (although it was further persecuted, particularly between 1952 and 1956) at the cost of collaborating with the government, thus partially validating the state's authority. For their part, the government had to admit that some of the Church's privileges were irrevocable, and accept that it would be increasingly difficult for the unpopular communist authorities to maintain stability and enforce communist reforms on society without some sort of agreement with the PRCC. It must be noted that both sides were, by-and-large, forced to accept this state of affairs, rather than choose it.



This deadlock extended beyond relations between Church and state. The first half of the 1950s brought about feelings of disillusionment and despair to most Poles, with the communists tightening their grip on power and independent social institutions and international influences losing ground in the country. People for the most part appear not to have accepted the new order, but they still had to adjust to the new reality that was communist rule. The spirit of opposition to the communist regime was replaced by a survival instinct: 'society was supposed to live with the awareness that the existing situation was not to be changed (...) until the current generation died out' (Świda-Ziemia 1997:241).

The permanence of the communist regime was confirmed by the drafting and implementing of new legislation. In February 1952, the communist authorities issued a decree declaring the abolition of certain Church ranks and offices. This was an open attempt to intrude into a sphere previously exclusively reserved for Church authorities. The first Polish communist constitution that followed, in July 1952, was yet another blow to the independence and social standing of the Catholic Church, and presented an overview of the communists' understanding of church-state relations. Article 70 of the new basic law proclaimed that 'the Church is separated from the State. The principles of the relationship between Church and State, as well as the legal position and the property status of religious bodies, shall be determined by laws', and that 'the abuse of freedom of conscience and religion for purposes of endangering the interests of the People's Republic of Poland shall be punished' (*Sejm* 2009). These constitutional clauses gave the state numerous advantages over the Church. First of all, although the constitution declared that the Church was separate from the state, it still gave the state absolute power over religious matters. Moreover, the concept of 'abuse of freedom of conscience of religion' was formulated as a potential threat to the state, thus providing the authorities with a mechanism for controlling and limiting the activities of religious organisations (i.e. potentially accusing them of abusing freedom of religion as an anti-government activity).

The new constitutional provisions thus deprived the PRCC of the leading position it had been granted in the 1921 constitution, as the communist government sought to lessen the influence of the Church by placing all denominations on an equal footing. According to the 1921 constitution, relations between Church and state were supposedly regulated entirely by the Concordat. No provisions were made for the consequences of infringing upon the autonomy of the Church or its property rights. Furthermore, there was no mention of religious instruction in schools (*Sejm* 2009).

And so, through the institution of the new constitution, the communist authorities confirmed the existence of a new model of church-state separation: the state was independent from the Church, and the latter had no right to intervene in state affairs; equally, the state maintained control of the Church and religious affairs in general. In most democratic regimes churches are allowed to function freely, and are treated like other non-state organisations. The new Polish constitution, however, showed that the communist government did not afford the Church autonomy or equal status with other organisations. The PRCC had no official legal status, and there was no restriction on the regulatory power of the state over matters of religion. Moreover, a new provision found its way into the constitution—‘abuse of freedom of conscience’ (Constitution 1952)—and any anti-state activities of the Church could be severely punished by the authorities in light of the basic law.

Empowered by this new law and the accompanying anti-Church decrees, the government continued its clampdown on the last remnants of PRCC presence in social life. In September 1953, a prominent show trial was organised to prosecute Archbishop Kaczmarek of Kielce for purported espionage on behalf of the American ambassador in Poland and the National Committee for a Free Europe. Never before had such a high-ranking Church official been tried by the communist Polish state, and it was a sign of an even tougher approach to the PRCC hierarchy adopted by the state. Cardinal Wyszyński was requested to issue a public condemnation of the bishop, which he failed to produce. As a result, the Primate was asked to

relinquish his pastoral duties and was later arrested. This was the symbolic peak of Stalinist repression of the PRCC; perhaps because of internal and international indignation in defence of the Cardinal, the Polish government gave up on the trial (Żaryn 2000).

Nevertheless, while Wyszyński was being moved across various locations in northern and eastern Poland in secrecy, persecution of the PRCC hierarchy continued. A number of bishops and members of their entourage were arrested and detained. All bishops were forced to take an oath of allegiance to the People's Republic of Poland and its government, and to vow to strengthen the state and its security. This action was heavily criticised by the Holy See, showing that the communists' strategy of undermining Church unity was effective enough to provoke the Catholic hierarchy. A similar divide and rule strategy was implemented locally: authorities insisted on handing parishes over to 'patriot-priests', and ordered regional Church authorities to dismiss priests who did not follow state legislation. The last step in eradicating remnants of religious presence in the public domain was the abolition of morning prayers in state schools and replacing them with a morning assembly. With this, Catholicism was all but removed from public life.

The Stalinist period in the People's Republic of Poland thus set the terms of future church-state relations, and was an important point of reference both for state authorities and the PRCC hierarchy. The last years of Stalin's rule and the short period preceding the historical 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) were marked by an aggressive attack on all aspects of the PRCC's local and national structures, its presence in Polish social and cultural life and its international standing. The authorities attempted to eliminate all independent civil society organisations (religious and secular alike) and realise the Marxist assumption that the rule of the 'universal class' reunites state and society. This theory of total assimilation led to an almost complete replacement of civil society by the state. In terms of church-state separation, the issue was now almost entirely one-sided; the Church was fully

separated from all things relating to state and public life, but the state was firmly fixed on controlling the Church and all its operations.

This situation was not to last. As events unfolded, this divisive strategy began to prove inefficient and, despite initial gains, turned out to be a major blow to the communists' already disastrous reputation in Polish society. In terms of the Church's presence in public life, 1956, the year of the Polish Thaw, was a real turning point. Despite the communists' strict policies and attacks in the Stalinist period, the attempt to destroy the PRCC was eventually abandoned. The authorities never dared to imprison key Church leaders again, and even allowed for a number of key Church initiatives to be unveiled (see below for details of the Great Novena and papal visits to Poland), marking a shift in the balance of power, and affirming the place of religion in public life during the ensuing decades of communist rule. This was particularly visible in terms of the PRCC's symbolic praetorian role as a moral authority undermining the monopoly of the communist state.

Subsequent developments during the post-1956 communist era clearly show that the PRCC was once again to secure a stable place in the country's public life. Although its position would still be challenged on numerous occasions, and although its privileges and functioning were limited by the socialist character of the state, co-operation between Church and state authorities continued in a range of fields. The praetorian syndrome developed further, fuelled by regular political crises (1968, 1970, 1976, amongst others), meaning that the Church was increasingly active in Polish public and political life (albeit not entirely openly, and still as an official enemy of the state), and became an institution allowing activists to channel certain political opinions and ideas within the public square.

## **Illusory armistice: 1956-70**

It is worth looking at the period known as the Polish Thaw more closely, for a major political change in Moscow, and Russian criticism of Stalinist policies that took place then, had serious repercussions for the whole of the Soviet bloc, including Poland. At the time of Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalinism, growing dissatisfaction with Bolesław Bierut's orthodox rule (1947-1956) and disappointment with the political and economic situation of the country fomented widespread restiveness among the Poles. The Soviet-trained and organised Natolin group of Polish communists, in power during the Stalinist years, faced a major challenge from a group of home-grown communists led by Władysław Gomułka. In October 1956, a bloodless revolution took place in Poland, resulting in the coming to power of more patriotic communists and the installation of Gomułka as the country's leader. The fact that Gomułka, a doctrinal communist and staunch ally of the Soviet Union, was perceived by society to be a patriot shows the level of indoctrination and moral relativism brought about by Stalinism. Whereas in late 1940s Gomułka would be perceived as a backward, uneducated communist apparatchik, in the face of the brutality of Bierut years and the terrible toll that Stalinist policies took on Poles, Gomułka was seen as a saviour.

Regardless of the categorisation of Gomułka's ideological position, he was regarded as a leader who would redirect the Communist Party's thinking towards national interests. In order to cement his grip on power, Gomułka sought support from dissident groups within society, including the Church. Mass protests in defence of Cardinal Wyszyński resulted in Gomułka's decision to free the detained cleric, along with his colleagues. Further to these developments, a Joint Commission of Representatives of the Government and the Episcopate was created to resolve contentious issues in Church-state relations. To the surprise of many, it took the Commission only just over a month to reach an agreement. On December 8 1956, the Commission issued the following statement:

The representatives of the Episcopate declared that as a result of changes in public life aimed at the consolidation of rule and law, justice and peaceful coexistence, the raising of social morality and redressing of wrongs, the Government and State authorities will find full understanding for these aims in the Church hierarchy and among the clergy. The representatives of the Episcopate also expressed full support for the actions undertaken by the Government aimed at the consolidation and development of People's Poland, at the amalgamation of the efforts of all citizens in harmonious work for the good of the country, conscientious observance of the laws of People's Poland, the fulfilment by citizens of their duties toward the State.

(Piekarski 1979:66)

The document contained further statements confirming the PRCC's allegiance to the socialist state, and listed numerous concessions from the authorities to the Church and religion in general. Non-obligatory teaching of religion in state schools was allowed, and the state allowed the Vatican to nominate new bishops in the Recovered Territories (i.e. the western and northern parts of the country that belonged to Germany before 1945).

The establishment of the Commission, and the final statement it produced, brought about a new balance of power in the People's Poland. Ost (1990:112) contends that the Church had taken a corporatist position in 1956, and accepted privileges from Gomułka. Ost further argues that the PRCC, as an extremely hierarchical body, was used to negotiating with other hierarchical bodies, and saw itself as a partner in dialogue with state authorities. This would suggest that the Church was actually looking for a privileged position within the emerging state socialist system, with no intention to abolish that system. This view undermines the claim of some Polish authors (Dudek and Gryz 2006; Żaryn 2001) that the Church's steadfast position had actually contributed to the ultimate failure of a fully-fledged Soviet communist system in Poland. Since 1956, the Polish communist authorities have gradually distanced themselves from

two key policies of the Stalinist years: the merging of state and society by abolishing all civil society organisations; and the enforced collectivisation of farming. By leaving the Church to operate relatively freely in certain areas, and abandoning the struggle against individual farming (since the countryside was strongly supportive of the Church), Poland started following the 'Polish road to socialism' proclaimed by Gomułka. This road was characterised by a certain dualism continuing church-state conflict, as well as a degree of mutual accommodation in relations. By 1956, the communists seemed to have realised that each time they failed in an attempt to assault the Church they lost more credibility, as their already low level of support fell in correlation with the Church's rise in popularity.

Khrushchev's Thaw and Gomułka's rule contributed significantly to a period of relative improvement and cautious dialogue in church-state relations. Wyszyński emerged from detention stronger and more confident than before, and his release had a similar effect on the Church. The Primate set about devising a strategy of re-integrating religion into social life. Mindful of previous accusations of destabilising the country and interfering with party politics, he shifted focus to pastoral matters and social affairs. Cardinal Wyszyński's release from jail coincided with the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Jasna Góra vows of King John Casimir, considered a milestone for Polish Catholicism. The PRCC used this date as a springboard for the development of a decade-long campaign, the so-called Great Novena, preparing Polish Catholics for another national anniversary: the 1,000 years since Mieszko's baptism, celebrated as the Millennium of Polish nationhood.

Although the communists were quick to point out that the Thaw had its limits—and that by no means was it an opportunity to revise the current socio-political system—certain concessions gained by the Church remained. Even though the state had no competitors in terms of real power, the authorities of the People's Poland and the Catholic Church engaged in a symbolic struggle for the souls of ordinary Poles. This was very evident in the preparations for the 1966 Millennium celebrations. The renewing of the Jasna Góra vows in 1956 initiated a

period of intense grass-roots-level work by the Church. The PRCC's primary focus was on building an alternative discourse to the dominant Marxist-Leninist ideology and supporting communities in their daily struggle with social problems, such as family matters and alcoholism. The Great Novena continued with a replica of the Black Madonna icon setting out from Częstochowa and travelling through every parish in the country over a period of more than two decades. The government focused on celebrating 1966 as the millennium of Polish statehood, defining the character of the newly constructed political system and the communist regime. The PRCC, on the other hand, tried to focus on the consequences of baptism and the historical importance of Christianity as a constituent factor of Polish national identity, as a carrier of Poland's unity through centuries of foreign threat and domination, and as a symbolic representative of the nation.

The Great Novena and Millennium celebrations organised by the Church were important milestones in regaining influence in the public sphere, still limited by the framework of a secular communist state. In the face of an obvious failure to break the impetus of these Christian celebrations, the government tried to counter the PRCC's successes by continuous attacks on other fronts. The 1965 letter of Polish bishops to their German counterparts, affirming that 'we forgive and ask for forgiveness', became a pretext for the PZPR and the state apparatus to attack the Church's patriotic credentials. The government accused the Church hierarchy of being pro-German (i.e. pro-Nazi) and not loyal to Polish national interests (Dudek 1995:181). Verbal and press attacks escalated in 1966-8, a further low point in church-state relations.

The Prague Spring (January-August 1968) revealed the real face of the USSR's dominance in Eastern Europe. Moderate attempts at reforming the Czechoslovakian communist state were countered by the brutal intervention of Warsaw-pact armies. The Prague Spring made the Soviet Union sensitive to social tensions in satellite states and reluctant to initiate another intervention (i.e. in Poland), fearing deterioration in relations with the West.



Under these circumstances, Polish communists offered the Church a temporary moratorium on open conflict, and PRCC-state talks resumed (Micewski 1994:50). Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia caused a huge stir among Poland's elites, particularly amongst students and intellectuals. The reforming potential of the Thaw seemed exhausted, and there was widespread disappointment regarding the possibility of changing the system from within.

The developments following the Prague Spring were crucial to the formation of organised anti-communist opposition in Poland and a change in the status quo in church-state relations. A major power clash between different factions within the PZPR coincided with the controversy surrounding the Soviet-led intervention in Czechoslovakia. Both factors led to a wave of popular unrest in Warsaw, Krakow and other big cities. A wave of politically-inspired anti-Semitism swept across the country, forcing thousands of Polish Jews into exile and others into hiding their origins. Under these circumstances, Polish communists urgently needed allies in calming social unrest. The PRCC was one such ally; Dudek and Gryz (2006) point out that although the Church generally opposed the political violence used by communists, it made no direct response to anti-Semitism and the subsequent enforced exodus of Jewish Poles. It could be argued that the PRCC decided to take a more pro-government stance in order to secure further concessions, as had happened in the past. Yet again, as was the case during the 1956 crisis, Church and state authorities co-operated on strategic issues to mutual benefit. The Church stayed clear of the politically motivated anti-Semitic campaign unleashed by the authorities, and engaged in collaborative talks at a time of popular unrest and political crisis, thus validating the authority of the Party and contributing to stabilising the country's social and political landscape. Conversely, it became obvious that the authorities could not control political crises, particularly those involving mass protests, without resorting to the Church's assistance. This duopoly of power and stability, which started in 1956, was now fully fledged, and continued to decide on key developments in the country in subsequent years.

As early as May 1968, the PRCC had secured a major new influence in relation to its communication with clergy and the faithful. The Episcopate decided to start publishing a weekly, *Pismo Okólne* ('The Circular', PO), which offered a briefing on important Church events, shared the opinions of Church authorities and publicised all relevant PRCC and Vatican documents. Communiqués contained in the circular were supposed to be read out loud during Sunday services. The importance of this decision lay in the particularity of communist censorship. Only printed materials were subject to censorship, and so the circulars were typewritten and copied manually. This gave the PRCC an invaluable tool in communicating with its own clergy, and indeed the whole Catholic community in Poland. It also meant that the government implicitly allowed the Church to develop its own discourse and rhetoric without direct state supervision, a real breakthrough in the Soviet bloc (Żaryn 2003:279).

Despite being a relative improvement on the Stalinist years, Gomułka's rule was an unstable period in Polish Church history. The Church asserted itself as a semi-independent social institution with some influence over public life, but intense ideological struggles with the state and party apparatus continued. As important as these struggles were, what was more important for church-state relations was that the alliance between the PRCC and the communist authorities was ultimately strengthened. The authorities openly turned to the Church at times of unrest, and the Church eagerly rendered its support to the authorities. In return, the Church continued to obtain concessions from the state for some of its operations (including publishing a non-censored circular newsletter). Additionally, the Church's strongly anti-communist and pro-human-rights activities were muted when an agreement with the state was at stake, as was the case during the Prague Spring and anti-Semitic events of March 1968. Despite ideological differences, the Church was ready to compromise on some of its values and policies for the sake of political gain.

## Interrupted decade – prelude to Solidarity: 1970-76

Nevertheless, it was these underlying tensions between state, Church and society which were revealed by rapid changes in post-1970 Poland. The economic inefficiency of Gomułka's rule and accompanying drastic price increases resulted in mass protests among Gdańsk workers in December 1970, leading to the death of almost forty protesters and a change in the PZPR's leadership.

The country's new leader, Edward Gierek, came to power with a broad reform-and-change agenda. This also included a new framework for church-state relations both in internal and foreign policy. The most important changes were in the rhetoric used by party and state institutions and the official attitude towards the Church, which allowed for the greater public visibility of the PRCC. The impetus towards secularising society and weakening the PRCC remained, however, and the state continued implementing certain anti-Church policies.

Gierek himself was born into a devoutly Catholic, working-class family, and was much more aware than Gomułka of the power of Polish religious belief and practice, particularly in the countryside. Having lived in France and Belgium, and being fluent in French, Gierek was also more sophisticated and cosmopolitan than Gomułka, and this influenced his choice of methods in dealing with the PRCC, and helped him to adopt a more secretive style of dealing with the Church, involving more frequent direct talks with Church hierarchs that were not publicised (Rolicki 1990).

Gierek's administration developed an ambitious plan of economic and social development based on increased production and consumption, and sought a broad national consensus regarding necessary reforms. Official state propaganda praised the new 'second Poland' project of a country 'gaining strength' and Poles 'living better lives' (Garton Ash 1999:15-19). Since the new economic plans required substantial cash inflows, and because the West was the only available source of loans, Gierek's project also included improving relations

on the other side of the Iron Curtain. In Poland itself, the need for national unity and the calming of potential unrest required the party and state structures to seek allies outside the traditional power and control structures functioning in pre-1970 Poland. The Church's increased public presence throughout the years of the Great Novena and the Millennium celebrations made it an ideal ally in reaching out to all social groups, strengthening the PRCC's symbolic, praetorian role (Kubik 1994:127-129). The communists had concluded back in 1956 that destroying and taking over the PRCC was not a viable strategy, and now further lessons from the post-Stalinist period suggested that the Church could be used as a 'transmission belt' (a group or institution communicating the official communist policy line to groups not directly affiliated with the Communist Party) in strengthening the party's grip on society.

All of the above-mentioned factors contributed to a complex, three-tiered pattern of state policy towards religion in the 1970s. In line with the new rulers' strategy of national unity, all open conflicts and public debates between the authorities and the Church were played down in official statements and communist media. Despite this purported armistice, however, concrete steps undertaken by the government in favour of the Church were not widely publicised. Instead, the authorities remained overtly loyal to the communist atheist doctrine, and even extended the limitation of religious practice and functioning of religious organisations, including the PRCC. Although policies directed against the PRCC were now more low-key and less confrontational, persecution of the Church nevertheless continued. Even as the PRL's new authorities tried to improve the country's international image, emphasise the new character of church-state relations in their foreign policy and improve relations with the Vatican, they still tried to undermine the authority of the PRCC.

The first pillar of the new state policy was mainly expressed through the public statements of government and party officials. Prime Minister Piotr Jaroszewicz announced in December 1970 that the government 'shall aim at a full normalisation of relations between the State and Church, at the same time expecting that the Government's efforts will meet with

proper understanding of clerical and lay Catholic circles' (Piekarski 1979:69), which was the first statement made by a leader of a Soviet satellite state to claim that relations between the communist authorities and religious groups/institutions were close to normal. Stanisław Kania, a senior PZPR Central Committee member (and later Gierek's successor) reiterated during a meeting with Bishop Dąbrowski in January 1971 that the new authorities 'sincerely want a compromise, because there is a conflict with the Church. It [i.e. the relationship between Church and state] should be good, but it is not' (Raina 1995:47). Gierek himself spoke of co-operation between 'believers and non-believers' in his first official speech (*Trybuna* 1970). The PRCC authorities were divided over the party's new approach. Some bishops, like Bishop Kałwa of Lublin, adopted a conciliatory tone. Bishop Kominek and Primate Wyszyński himself contended that the Church should be united with the people in their opposition to the communists, particularly after the bloody strikes of December 1970, which did not lead to any settlement between workers and state. Ultimately, the Episcopate decided to take a moderate position and let the new communist leadership improve its record.

Another party-state committee for religious affairs was created in February 1971, with the aim of 'co-ordinating initiatives related to normalisation of relations between state and Church' (Dominiczak 1991:206). Primate Wyszyński met Prime Minister Jaroszewicz in March to discuss the concrete aspects of this normalisation. The first results followed swiftly: in June 1971, parliament passed a law restoring ownership of Church lands and buildings confiscated in 1950. It was part of a larger international dispute over the permanent character of post-war territorial borders, particularly the western and northern territories given to Poland, and former Polish territories now belonging to the USSR. The state restored Church ownership of more than 7,000 buildings, chapels and monasteries, as well as reinstating land the state had seized two decades earlier. In return, the Polish Church lobbied in the Vatican for the official recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line that had already been secured by a treaty between West Germany and Poland, signed in 1970. Although the Vatican refused to realign its diocesan

boundaries to reflect the new Polish-Soviet borders, Pope Paul VI officially announced the Vatican's recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line in June 1972.

This reciprocity resulted in a number of other concessions from the government's side. Minor adjustments were made to the legislature, reducing the administrative burden on parish priests and granting a number of building permits for new churches. Additionally, Gierek decided to scrap the police post guarding the icon of the Black Madonna in Częstochowa, effectively allowing the Church to make full use of this precious artefact. This was a significant decision, as it allowed the Church to reinstate its policy of sending the icon around the country in a similar pattern to that followed during the Great Novena. The new peregrination of the icon started in 1972 from the Sandomierz diocese, and lasted throughout the 1970s. Although the success of the Great Novena could not be repeated, the governmental Office for Religious Denominations reported in July 1973 that the icon's passage through the Kielce region was accompanied by groups of young people as well as volunteers of the Voluntary Fire Brigades, and that the streets were filled with religious slogans and symbols (Żaryn 2003:302). This only confirmed the Church's increased public visibility and relative freedom in pursuing certain elements of its agenda. All of the above-mentioned developments were interpreted by party and state structures as significant departures from the policies of the Bierut and Gomułka eras, and as expressions of genuine will for dialogue. The developments of early 1970s also confirmed that the government sought to ameliorate its relations with the Church and reach out to the public through the PRCC.

On the side of the Church, however, the changes in church-state policy in the first half of the 1970s were but a minor adjustment, and a small step towards normality. The PRCC saw the changes as being a result of Church resilience and the concerted efforts of its clergy and the faithful. And indeed, the tactical change in the regime's movement away from an anti-religious policy did not mean that the state would abandon its anti-Church activity. A flagship project of Gierek's administration, the socialisation of agriculture, although it was not directly aimed at the

Church, nevertheless undermined its social base by providing a challenge to small-size and subsistence farming and speeding up rural-urban migration. Upon Gierek's coming to power, 84% of farmlands were privately owned; following new policies, this number dropped to 80% in 1975 (Rolicki 1990).

Education was the second key area where the state sought to further limit religious presence. A comprehensive school reform, launched in 1973 and completed in 1978, was modelled on the Soviet 10-class general education programme, including the introduction of afternoon classes and increased socialist content in the curriculum. There were widespread concerns within the Church about decreased parental supervision in the new comprehensive schooling system, and about the difficulties in providing after-school religious instruction. Authorities also required teachers of religion to supply lists of students attending religious classes, even though they took place outside the school premises (Piekarski 1978).

The last instance of the party's new offensive in church-state relations related to foreign affairs and the country's international standing. First of all, Gierek's reliance on foreign loan suppliers increased the importance of Poland's image abroad, thus forcing the authorities to seek new international allies. Second, the state hoped to create a Vatican/government/PRCC forum and use it as a means of increasing leverage on the Polish Church. The PZPR saw the Vatican as an instrument to mitigate the PRCC's political activity in Poland, in line with the Catholic Church's official policy of political neutrality. The Holy See was also expected to influence the PRCC's stance towards the legitimacy of the communist state. As one of the party documents from the period suggested, the Vatican was expected to engage 'in actions of gaining complete loyalty of the Church hierarchy towards the Government and respect of the Church towards state interests in internal policy' (Raina 2001:103).

Regular talks with the Vatican started in April 1971, and the establishment of seven new dioceses in the Recovered Territories, resulting in the formal acceptance of post-war border changes, was seen by the authorities as the first major successes of this dialogue. In November

1973, Pope Paul VI received the PRL's Foreign Minister, Olszowski. However, despite the party's sincere attempts at influencing the Vatican's policy towards the PRCC and Polish Catholics, the Holy See refused to take any more steps towards accommodating Gierek's demands. The First Secretary's meeting with Paul VI in 1977, even though historically significant—as being the first meeting of a socialist state leader with the Supreme Pontiff—had few consequences for church-state relations in Poland.

Paradoxically, the PRCC and the Vatican turned out to be Gierek's most desirable allies in the face of the political and social crisis that gripped the country halfway through his term in office. In December 1975, the Party announced a series of proposals for constitutional amendments designed to strengthen the socialist character of the basic law and the position of the PZPR within the institutional order. One of the most contentious proposals related to Article 57 of the 1952 constitution, outlining the rights and obligations of the PRL's citizens. The party's proposed version proclaimed that the 'rights of citizens are inseparably linked with the thorough and conscientious fulfilling of duties to the fatherland' (Żaryn 2003:336). This statement met with widespread criticism from intellectuals and artists, as well as from the Church hierarchy. The fact that the state rephrased the article is a clear example of the PRCC's growing political leverage, even in the years preceding the creation of organised anti-communist opposition movements in Poland. The final wording of the article was: 'The citizens of the Polish People's Republic should honestly fulfil their duties towards the motherland and contribute to its development' (Constitution 1952).

The PRCC's new political clout had two important implications. First of all, it proved that the PRCC had decided, if limited, influence over the party's policies even in the key areas of policy-making. Second, it could be understood as indicative of the Church's participation in the law-making process and, therefore, the legitimising of the communist state. This was an important step in view of the Church's later co-operation with the communist authorities on legal changes pertaining to the PRCC's status (see further in this chapter). Moreover, PRCC's



involvement in constitution-writing re-confirmed its corporatist status and enshrined the praetorian arrangements in communist Poland. Advising the government on legal issues was far from the Church's standard practice in the public domain in Poland, and yet, in the absence of other actors able to defend the moderately anti-Soviet sentiment represented by many social groups and organisations, the PRCC acted as a political lobbyist. What is more, the Church yet again proved that it was ready and willing to enter into co-operative agreements with the communist authorities in order to promote its agenda. This episode of close co-operation with the authorities has shown that the PRCC was, at times, capable of transgressing its role as a symbolic praetorian institution and engaging in institutional praetorianism.

The ultimate test of the PRCC's position in the public sphere came immediately afterwards. Political crisis caused by constitutional reform was followed by a much more serious economic crisis. In June 1976, the government introduced a significant (30% on average) price increase for various commodities, including everyday goods and staple foods. This led to mass protests and strikes, forcing the communists to roll back the plan—a humiliating defeat for Gierek's regime—which was a resounding echo of the 1970 crisis they had pledged to avoid. Police brutality, the state's lack of flexibility, and the social unrest that followed the June 1976 stand-off all brought about a major change in Polish politics and public life in general. The appearance of independent, non-state organisations with political postulates, as well as increasing opposition to the government and the building of independent social institutions such as trades unions, were among the main contributory factors to the collapse of the Polish communist regime just over a decade later.

The second half of the 1970s proved to be a breakthrough for communist Eastern Europe, particularly for Poland. Rapid and often unforeseen changes in politics and the economy caused a major reshaping of public life: although still within the Soviet framework, they were a prelude to the revolutionary changes of the following decade. In the case of Poland's communist regime and the role of religion in Polish public life behind the Iron Curtain, the changes were comprehensive. First of all, the PRCC itself was evolving—both naturally, and as a result of political changes in the country (see below)—with the end of the Wyszyński era and a new relationship with the Vatican. This relationship was redrafted after the October 1978 election of Karol Cardinal Wojtyła to the papal throne, an event that sent shockwaves through the Soviet camp. John Paul II's enthronement was of great significance to Poland's fate over the next two decades. The Church's external environment changed as well: in Poland, independent anti-communist opposition groups started operating after June 1976 alongside a change in the country's leadership. The Soviet Union was suffering ever more as a result of fierce competition with the USA, and was not so prompt to respond to and supervise the satellite states. All of the above-mentioned factors contributed to the PRCC's new role, and to the increased visibility of religion in Polish public life that was noticeable in the second half of the decade.

This period of the 1970s, preceding the creation of Solidarity, together with the first years of trade-union activity, were crucial for further developments in Poland, both on the political (leading up to the Round Table and free elections in June 1989) and social levels, including the social standing of the PRCC and the access to the public sphere by independent civil organisations. The early experiences of both society and the Church when dealing with a number of concurring social movements shaped public debate in post-1989 Poland in a number of ways. In order to properly assess the new shape of relationships between religion, society and the state apparatus, the reason for the post-1976 changes need to be analysed.

The first catalyst of change emerged with the Radom and Ursus strikes. It can be argued that the June 1976 protests resembled the 1956 and 1970 events in many ways. The similarities included short-term causes (primarily socio-economic) and the demands put forward by the striking workers, usually pertaining to their everyday needs and the government's price-control policy. What made the 1976 strikes unique, however, was the involvement of other social groups, such as students, intellectuals and artists, in defending the workers' cause, and the long-lasting effects of the increased social activity the strikes brought about.

Although today Solidarity is seen as the main opposition force that drove Polish society to democracy in the 1980s, there were a number of important (although smaller in size and scope) civic organisations that initiated the anti-communist wave. They were of particular significance to church-state relations and the place of religion in public life, since many of those organisations turned into political parties and movements in post-1989 Poland. It is also important to note the interplay between political activism, civil society and religion. Many notions of what is considered 'political', 'religious' and 'pertaining to civil society' are profoundly influenced by the early years of the Solidarity movement and the PRCC's increased involvement in public activity. Furthermore, the PRCC's unrivalled status as the only independent social institution in communist Poland, and the relative increase in its public visibility after 1956 were challenged by the emergence of new social movements and events that soon unfolded.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Marxist-Leninist doctrine assumed the state's total control of society, advocating a merging of all social institutions and groups that would not allow for a distinction between legislative, executive and judicial branches of the state, or a distinction between political and civil societies. Even though religion was in many ways outside of the official scheme, by abolishing all traditional divisions Polish communists allowed the Church to assume many roles. This was particularly visible in the developments following the 1976 strikes.

In September 1976, in response to the government's crackdown on striking workers, fourteen intellectuals signed a public 'Appeal to PRL's Society and Authorities' and established the 'Workers' Defence Committee' ('Komitet Obrony Robotników', KOR). The Committee demanded the release of jailed workers and the rehiring of those fired for striking, thus revealing the scale of the government's crackdown on the strikes and their punishment of those responsible for breaking the law. It is worth noting that the KOR gathered members representing all sides of the young Polish political underground, from nationalist right-wingers to socialists. The Committee expanded its membership and moved onto providing tangible support for workers affected by the government's crackdown. Hiring lawyers, gathering medical evidence of police brutality, providing information to foreign media and publishing their own periodical were among the KOR's major achievements. Despite the government's initial nervous reaction and the arrest of key KOR activists, the Polish authorities were subdued by Western pressure and declared an amnesty in July 1977, freeing workers and activists involved in the post-June 1976 events.

The KOR's creation and successful campaigning may have contributed to the spontaneous appearance of other civil society organisations focused on civil and human rights. In 1977, the right-wing 'Movement for Defense of Human and Civic Rights' ('Ruch Obrony Praw Człowieka i Obywatela', ROPCiO) came to life, followed by the 'Confederation of Independent Poland' ('Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej', KPN) and the 'Young Poland Movement' ('Ruch Młodej Polski', RMP) in 1979. It must be noted that, although the official profile of those organisations would categorise them as human-rights movements, many of their demands and implicit goals included changing government policy and even overthrowing the communist regime.

The PRCC's reaction to the creation of the KOR and similar groups was a significant indicator of the Church's attitude towards other seemingly like-minded, but ultimately independent, anti-communist organisations. Although Wyszyński and other PRCC hierarchs

made numerous calls for the government to respect human and workers' rights, the Church provided no explicit support for the KOR. Even though KOR activists, no matter how ideologically different from the Church, openly praised its advocacy of human rights, the Episcopate never produced any public statements supporting the KOR. One can argue that the extreme character of the KOR's, ROPCiO's and RMP's demands, and the profiles of their leadership (drawn from a variety of backgrounds, including socialists and anti-clericals) rendered any support impossible. It must be noted, however, that the Church's behaviour was symptomatic of an established, relatively well-situated institution that preserved the current order and valued stability over reform and unrest. The PRCC failed to react promptly to the June 1976 events, and only did so after initial reactions of other groups and individuals opposed the government's actions (Żaryn 2003:379).

The initial wave of anti-communist protest, launched in 1976, received an unexpected boost when, in 1978, Cardinal Karol Wojtyła of Cracow was elected to the papal throne. Taking the whole Soviet bloc's establishment by surprise, the Polish Pope chose his native country as the destination of his second foreign trip in June 1979. The mere idea of the Supreme Pontiff visiting a Soviet bloc country seemed impossible, and yet—for a number of reasons, not all of which are known even today—the Polish authorities agreed that the visit should take place. The visit, later referred to as the 'second baptism of Poland', to underline its historical importance, proved to be a huge success for the Polish Church and Polish opposition. Even though the communist state-sponsored coverage downplayed the political significance of the visit, the spontaneous reactions of crowds and individuals during the pilgrimage far outstripped the response to official communist public events (see Kubik 1994). Over forty thousand volunteers registered to help with organising the visit. Thousands more took part in papal masses and other public events surrounding the visit. More importantly, the Pope's visit symbolically transformed Polish society, boosted its morale and improved the PRCC's standing in negotiations with the authorities. The Office for Religious Denominations announced in 1981 that the average

attendance at public religious events rose by 20-30% year on year. From October 1980, Catholic Masses were regularly transmitted by the state-owned Polish Radio. At the same time, the Catholic press enjoyed a real surge in popularity with the reactivation of the 'Sunday' (*Niedziela*) weekly, with a circulation of over 100,000, and the introduction of the Polish edition of *Osservatore Romano* (Żaryn 2003:447). John Paul II's dramatic call for The Holy Spirit to 'descend and renew the face of the *land*, this *land*' (John Paul II 1999:143) has proven prophetic, and has entered history of Poland's anti-communist opposition.

Despite the transformative character of the Pope's visit, the PRCC remained cautious in its attitude towards anti-communist opposition. The extent of the Church's leaning towards order and its wish to preserve a precious balance of power in society was fully revealed during the crisis of 1980 and the establishment of the Solidarity trade union. A number of works have been written about the unique nature of this social movement, trade union and, eventually, political entity (Garton Ash 1983; Goodwyn 1991; Ost 1990; Kubik 1994; Osa 2003). It is not the purpose of this thesis to analyse the complex origins of Eastern Europe's first independent trade union. However, the consequences of Solidarity's emergence in 1980 for Poland can be felt until the present day, and its relationship with the Church—both at Episcopate and local level—is of profound importance to the shape of Poland's church-state relations and the place of religion in public life. This clearly warrants closer investigation.

The Church influenced Solidarity's creation in a number of ways. First of all, the election of John Paul II to the papal throne, his visit in Poland in June 1979 and the spirit of increased freedom in public life contributed to the August 1980 accords. The accords—the foundation stone of Solidarity—were also the culmination of a violent summer of popular protest and worker strikes. This time the authorities conceded a massive defeat and allowed for a number of long-term changes in Polish politics and socio-economic life. September 1980 saw the creation (and legal registration) of Eastern Europe's first independent trade union. Furthermore, the authorities vowed to limit censorship, reform the economy and assist the victims of the 1970

and 1976 crises. Besides the spiritual guidance the Church provided to the movement, it also offered advice and support to its leaders in the difficult months of the union's creation.

Despite all the credit the Church received for its support of Solidarity, the early response was muted, and the initial reactions of the Episcopate to social unrest and the creation of a mass-protest movement were far from enthusiastic (Micewski 1987). In the first months and years of Solidarity's activity, the Church was more focused on increasing its own standing, defending its interests and preserving the status quo than on promoting change. Back in August 1980, when the country was on the brink of a mass-strike, Wyszyński appealed for calm and responsible behaviour in the time of unrest. The cardinal's death in May 1981, and the subsequent change in the PRCC leadership, only increased the Church's scepticism towards Solidarity (Passent 1988). The incumbent Cardinal Glemp was much less charismatic, more timid and more focused on the PRCC's own interests. This was not a good prognosis for Solidarity and its agenda. Glemp's fear of instability, conflict and social chaos further distanced the Church from all opposition movements, not just Solidarity, and the institution of martial law, declared by the communist authorities in December 1981, put the Episcopate's allegiance to Solidarity to the test. Despite the West's rapid condemnation of martial law, neither the PRCC nor the Vatican issued any statements to this effect in the first days following the military coup.

When they did come, their reserve astonished many. The Episcopate's fear of Soviet intervention and Glemp's inclination towards stability and social harmony, combined with aversion to KOR and ROPCiO as a 'radical' organisations, resulted in a number of statements calling for the government to lift the harsh martial-law regulations, and urging Solidarity and other social activists to restrain themselves. Glemp condemned Solidarity leaders for their extreme demands, declared that the movement shared responsibility for the course of events and supported the government's claims that Solidarity had indeed planned outbreaks of violence, therefore implicitly justifying some of the government's actions (Ramet 1995:186). In a speech at the Catholic University of Lublin in November 1982, Glemp enquired about the

Church's strategy towards the government during martial law, asking rhetorically, 'Would the Church set up some sorts of plans, tactics and strategies? So it would enter some sort of factional struggle, political game, it would become a partner, so it would have enemies? You're expecting the Church to oppose its enemies and hate [them]?' (Passent 1988). Glemp's obsession with a Western plot aimed at destabilising the country and sacrificing Poland in the name of breaking the Iron Curtain (Żaryn 2003:453) further contributed to the Episcopate's reserved stance towards the then illegal Solidarity (it was officially delegalized through a new Trade Union Act of October 1982, and fully legalised again only in April 1989).

The period between introduction of martial law (December 1981) and delegalisation of Solidarity (October 1982) and first partially free elections in the Soviet bloc (June 1989) were characterised by a certain dichotomy in relations between the PRCC, Solidarity and the state. On one hand, PRCC-state relations became closer intensified—the relations between PRCC and the communist government were at their most intense in the Solidarity years (Zieliński 2003:294). On the other hand, there was a visible tension within the Church, and a split between those advocating calm and reserve and those actively supporting Solidarity, and a two-tier approach combining support for Solidarity's activities on one hand, and active collaboration with the government on the other. In 1982, a small-scale revolution shook the PRCC when a group of two hundred local clergymen, angered by the Episcopate's soft stance vis-à-vis the authorities, paid a visit to Cardinal Glemp to express their frustration with the state of affairs. Although the Church certainly never endorsed martial law, it nevertheless co-operated with the authorities at every stage, therefore legitimising some of the government's actions. The group that visited the Cardinal demanded a more supportive stance of the PRCC towards Solidarity and may have contributed to the PRCC hierarchy allowing for more active grass-root level support for the movement from then on (Ost 1990:156-60).

It would be unjust to view the Church's relations with Solidarity through the actions of its hierarchy and to say that the PRCC only displayed negative attitudes towards the



underground movement. Throughout the period of 'underground Solidarity' (1982-1989), local PRCC structures and resources (buildings, clergymen, nuns and religious community centres) provided invaluable support and advice to Solidarity leaders fleeing arrest for underground activities during martial law until the movement's legal re-emergence. This included providing shelter for activists in hiding, charitable aid and legal aid for the arrested Solidarity members and their families, as well as providing premises for meeting and lectures and providing increased pastoral ministry services to all social and professional groups that requested it (Żaryn 2003:489-497).

John Paul II also offered support to the Polish opposition from the very first months of his papacy, and his influence on the course of events leading up to the collapse of communism in Poland should not be underestimated (see above). And yet, despite the Church's repeated claims of political neutrality and their support for the opposition, a number of statements and events show that the Church was equally preoccupied with securing its own interests and increasing its public presence through co-operating with the authorities. Following Cardinal Wojtyła's election (but not only because of it) the Polish Church's internal situation, public standing and influence on internal and international politics improved in numerous ways. Starting with John Paul II's visit to Poland in June 1979, the Church enjoyed unrivalled public attention and media coverage, including on state-controlled radio and television. All public TV and radio channels covered the event, including live transmissions, which was a real breakthrough for a secular socialist state. The PRCC's educational activities flourished during martial law, and many churches turned into busy community centres supporting artists, local communities and Solidarity activists. Despite the overall economic crisis of the 1980s, the PRCC enjoyed an unprecedented building boom, having secured an agreement with the government before martial law was declared. On the other hand, the communist authorities continued to control and limit the Church's activities and the place of religion in public space. The infamous 'battle of the crosses' (a controversy over the installation of crosses near the Auschwitz

concentration camp), which brought Poland to the world's attention in the 1990s (see Chapter 5), started in 1982, when the communist authorities decided to enforce the communist legislation regarding religious symbols in public venues. A symbolic summary of the superficial normality in church-state relations in early 1980s can be found in a communiqué of the Joint Commission of the Episcopate and Government Representatives from December 1983, insisting that 'church-state relations in Poland were developing properly' (Monticone 1986:187).

Those superficially good relations started to deteriorate after John Paul II's second visit in Poland, in June 1983. The communist government hoped that by allowing the Pope to visit it would contribute to calming down widespread frustration and dissatisfaction with martial law. Moreover, the Pope's visit was linked to the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Częstochowa Black Madonna icon, and was supposed to focus on purely pastoral and spiritual matters. To the government's surprise, the attendance rates during the 1983 visit surpassed even the 1979 numbers, with over seven million people (almost a quarter of the total population) attending services and standing on the route of the papal motorcade crossing the country. This mass public display of religiosity angered the authorities, and may have contributed to a surge in anti-clericalism visible in state policies from 1984. This was the year of a 'freeze' in church-state relations, caused on the one hand by the murder of father Popiełuszko, a popular Warsaw priest, by communist security services, and on the other a new government policy on religion that aimed to weaken the PRCC and secularise the society. It was seen by the PUWP as a continuation of the struggle against internal opposition—now that independent trades unions were in disarray, religion was a first class enemy. In 1985, the communist party decided to introduce secular 'religious education' in secondary schools and universities in Poland, aiming to teach about models of church-state relations and criticise the Catholic Church (Żaryn 2003:538). The government redoubled its efforts to remove crosses from schools across the country, a policy that was deeply unpopular with pupils and teachers alike, and led to numerous local-level rebellions and trials (Dudek and Gryz 2006:407-410). This was complemented by an

increased infiltration of the Catholic clergy by communist security services, with up to 15% of clergymen registered as secret informants by 1986 (Grajewski 1999:214).

John Paul II's third visit to Poland, in 1987, had been the subject of intense negotiations between the PRCC, the government and the Holy See since 1985, and was, in the eyes of the communists, meant to calm social unrest and dissatisfaction with the rapidly deteriorating economic situation. Yet again, it brought a surge of public displays of religiosity and further diminished the communist government's grip on society, paving the way towards the Round Table meeting and the later collapse of communist rule (see below).

All of the above-mentioned political and social developments, initiated in 1976 and growing through the 1980s, led to a substantial re-positioning of the Church and religion in Poland's public life. With the emergence of Solidarity, the PRCC lost its exclusive status as the only independent, non-state organisation in the PRL, but gained new attributes that can be characterised as 'participating without belonging' to political society. The curious nature of Polish opposition movements in the 1980s has been characterised by Ost as 'the politics of anti-politics' (Ost 1990). All Solidarity leaders, like their colleagues from earlier formations such as the KOR and the ROPCiO, vehemently denied involvement in politics and presented themselves as defenders of human rights, as trade union officials or as social activists (Ost 1991). The Church often condemned the political engagement of its clergymen, and yet remained a very active participant in public and political life. It could be argued that in view of the difficult conditions under which the PRCC had to operate during the last years of communist rule, accusations of politicisation and self-interest are unjustified. On the other hand, the Church's behaviour throughout the Solidarity years, particularly in the second half of the 1980s, demonstrated that it had a vibrant interest in all things political, notably in securing its own institutional status.

The PRCC's new attitude towards the state was cemented during the key political processes leading to democratic change in communist Poland. In 1988, the politically bankrupt

PZPR engaged in regular talks with the opposition about possible reforms. The PRCC Episcopate was part of the process, and assisted the re-legalisation of Solidarity after another wave of worker strikes came to an end in late 1988. Lech Wałęsa and the Minister of Internal Affairs, General Czesław Kiszczak, agreed that a series of structured, regular consultations would take place between the Party and Solidarity in order to discuss democratic reforms of the state. The Round Table talks brought together many important opposition and Party figures, and were facilitated by the Church. The talks began in February 1989 and lasted until April 1989. They comprised three work groups, focused on political reform, party and union pluralism and economic and social issues. The main outcomes of the Round Table talks included the reinstatement of the upper chamber of the Parliament and the presidential office and the granting of party and union pluralism, amongst a plethora of other pro-democratic changes. As a result, the first partly free democratic elections in the Soviet bloc took place on June 4 1989.

The Church's role in reinstating Solidarity and facilitating the Round Table talks showed the PRCC's ability to manoeuvre between government and opposition and secure a pivotal role in the transformation process. This policy was rewarded by both sides. Solidarity's gratitude was most vigorously expressed in the post-1989 period (analysed in Chapter 4); the communist authorities, aware of their own demise, were much more prompt in their reactions. In May 1989 the last communist *Sejm* passed three laws regulating the PRCC's legal status and religious freedoms and the social and economic rights of the clergy. This was a genuine breakthrough in a country where, according to official state ideology, religion was still restricted to private life, and where many minority religious denominations were regularly denied their basic rights.

## Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the role of religion and the Catholic Church in Poland's history with reference to its influence on national identity, the public presence of religion and relations

between state, society and religion. Although Poland is now seen as a homogenous Catholic country, its history confirms that religious diversity prevailed in Poland over centuries. The merging of national and religious identity, although present in earlier periods of Polish history, was reinforced only through foreign domination in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. A brief period of Polish independence between 1918 and 1939, along with relative democratisation and freedom of religion during this period, resulted in the rapid growth of anti-clerical and secular forces. The political and social landscape was once again reshuffled in the aftermath of World War II, putting religion on the defensive. Over four decades of communist rule meant a time of forced secularisation of public space, but the Church managed to retain some independence, and individual religiosity remained strong (ISKK 2012).

Despite the communists' initial anti-religious zeal, the PRCC managed to secure the bulk of its material and symbolic presence in the PRL. What is more, individual religiosity remained strong throughout the communist period. After the violence of the Stalinist years and persecution of clergy, the Episcopate and religion returned to everyday reality for most Poles. Although many important areas of social activity previously accessible to religious institutions, such as education, health care and charitable work, had been confined to state institutions, the PRCC remained strong and independent, a voice of relative opposition to communism and an important focus of non-state activity and thought. The gradual lifting of anti-religious legislation and activity post-1956 allowed the Church to slowly reclaim a part of the public sphere and work out a *modus vivendi* in relations with the state. The Church's resources and opportunities for action were limited, but its motivation to act in the public arena remained visible, as was its ability to be an efficient political operator, able regularly to co-operate with the government on a number of issues.

Notably, throughout the later years of communist rule (from the 1960s onwards), the PRCC became a carrier of public opinion and channelled the views of part of society to the communist authorities—a situation Huntington (1968) refers to as *praetorianism*. In the absence

of other significant non-state institutions, the Church often presented itself as the symbolic representative of the nation and addressed the government in highly relevant cases, such as the Millennium celebrations and workers' rights.

PRCC had the will and resources necessary to engage in co-operation with the government before any other non-state groups, such as KOR, ROPCiO and finally Solidarity, emerged.

Widespread claims of fierce PRCC anti-communism, and an unwavering opposition to the regime expressed by the Episcopate and clergy presented in post-communist Poland (see Chapter 4), do not look credible when assessed in the light of the PRCC's behaviour in the last decades of communist rule, particularly in the 1980s. Although the PRCC often defended human rights and stood up for the oppressed, whatever their background, its policy was largely based on defending its own institutional interests and privileges. The first reactions of the PRCC to the emergence of Solidarity confirm that its later support for the group was more of a tactical than strategic choice. Following from brief episodes of institutional praetorianism at the end of the 1970s (constitutional affairs and stabilising social unrest on the eve of martial law), the PRCC showed itself willing to enter into the sphere of institutional praetorianism throughout the 1980s (and then the early 1990s; see Chapter 4), including assuming a formal mediatory role between government and opposition in Round Table talks. What is more, the Church actively tried to expand its public presence at the expense of other groups in the lead-up to democratic change. Merely a year before the first democratic elections in the Soviet bloc, the Polish Episcopate contended that a measure of the PRL's democratisation is the authorities' consent to 'establish a broad social Catholic movement under the Episcopate's auspices and (...) [provide an] opening to private initiative through a relevant constitutional clause' (Monticone 1986:99). Although officially still denouncing the communist regime, the PRCC rushed to secure its legal status ahead of other religious and civil society organisations in May 1989, without any regard for minority religious groups. At the same time, the PRCC was very vocal about its devotion to

democracy and human rights and its desire to co-operate with other actors within the polity in order to reform the communist system. Strengthened by its successes, conceived on Polish communism's deathbed, and enjoying a great deal of authority among Poles, the PRCC marched on to new victories in the new democratic reality. The legacy of communist era was highly significant in the first years of democratic transformation (1989-1993), and consequently in setting the overall tone of religious republicisation and relationships between religion and public life in post-communist Poland. The next chapter will focus on those developments.

## Chapter 4: Religion and Democratic Transformation: 1989-1993

*Indeed, warriors and spectators alike seem to agree that the main ideological battle taking place today in Poland after the defeat of socialism is that between Catholicism and liberalism.*

(Casanova 1994:109)

In Chapter 3 I analysed the historical role of religion in Poland and the place of religion in public life over the centuries, arguing that it played a crucial role in the development of the Polish state and national identity. Furthermore, I contended that in post-war Poland, despite the PRCC's opposition to communist policies and its own co-operation with opposition movements (notably the Solidarity trade union), the Church was increasingly focused on securing its own interests, and indeed, gradually increased its presence in public life during the last decades of communist rule.

In this chapter I will assess the impact of the fall of the communist regime in 1989 and the early years of Polish democracy (1989-1993) on the role of religion in public life in Poland. This will be done through an analysis of public statements and policies pursued by politicians and political parties, churches, religious groups and institutions. The central argument of this chapter is that because of the collapse of state and social institutions, a split in the anti-communist opposition and the limited reach of civil society in the first years of democratic reforms (1989-1993), the PRCC's policies and leadership allowed it to further assert itself in the public realm and occupy a central place in a number of decision-making processes essential to the character of the new state. Secular groups, as well as non-Catholic religions, were gradually pushed to the margins of public debate. The Church's ability to manoeuvre between civil society and the political landscape inherited from previous regime contributed to its monopolisation of public life and high levels of religious republicisation. What is more, the Church's ambiguous attitude towards democracy, and the state's neutrality in religious matters, complicated



democratic transformation and impeded the development of a functional liberal democratic polity.

The idea that the initial transformation period, between 1989 and 1993, was crucial to the political and social development in Poland for years to come and led to the unwaveringly high public presence of religion in the face of ever-changing individual religiosity and widespread opposition to the Church's involvement in politics, is the subject of the next chapter.

### **The fall of the communist regime in Poland**

The June 1989 elections in Poland were a breakthrough for the whole Soviet bloc. For the first time since 1945, the communist party agreed to share power with the opposition, and opposition candidates were allowed to run for a share of parliamentary seats. The Round Table Agreement gave Solidarity a chance to compete for a third of seats in the parliament's lower chamber and all of the re-established upper chamber seats; in the end, they won a landslide victory, seizing all of the seats available. A permanent overthrow of the communist regime, which had seemed impossible only a few years earlier, became a reality. The 1989 events in Poland took most national and international political actors by surprise—including main stakeholders such as Western European and US governments, the Soviet Union, Polish communists, the opposition (notably, Solidarity) and the Vatican. All of them had to adjust to the new reality and develop new policies to face the situation. This was essential, as Poland was about to face a major socio-political change towards liberal democracy, and needed external support to implement necessary reforms.

The collapse of communism had a profound effect on all aspects of social life, including the place of religion in public life. The wave of democratic reforms and changes that followed the collapse was all-encompassing, but some of these changes had a particularly important

influence on religion, society and public life. First of all, Poland was transforming from a totalitarian communist dictatorship into a democratic state. All political institutions of the state were to be reformed. The political life of the country turned into a pluralist and—at least theoretically—ideologically neutral space. On an individual level, the new social order allowed for a differentiation of world views. People could, at last, believe what they liked, without fear of state retribution. Civil society was allowed to emerge as a new force, fostering the empowerment of individuals and ushering in a new quality of the political system: it would now function independently from state structures. An absolute ideology was replaced with a democratic electoral system and a culture of bargaining and negotiation. Poland left the vacuum of Soviet isolation to embrace globalisation; as a result, local issues quickly became global, and an eastern perspective was swiftly replaced by an aspiration to join the ‘West’.

Democratic reforms were most noticeable after the June 1989 elections, rapidly influencing the political and institutional spheres. Social changes, although equally important, were slower and initially less obvious. One of the most relevant changes on this level pertained to the new understanding of nation and society. Even though communism officially refrained from nationalist rhetoric and policies, Polish communists nevertheless based their popularity on nationalist sentiments. In the post-1989 reality, Poland had to redefine that national identity. Embracing democracy equalled moving away from being an ethnic nation to being a political, civic nation. In politics and the public sphere this also meant departing from this romantic and historical vision (often perpetrated by the Church) and accepting an identity as a liberal society. This process had profound consequences for developments in the field of religion and public life. A historical and romantic vision of the Polish nation assumed that regaining independence was the ultimate goal of all political activity (Kowalczykova 1991). This meant not only exercising sovereignty over Poland as a state, but also performing a moral transformation of society. But in a liberal society, independence is not a goal in itself; rather, it can be seen as a tool to achieve other aims, such as democratic norms, the rule of law and modernisation. This

last notion was at the forefront of most relevant debates in Poland's newly democratised public sphere (see below for an outline of the PRCC's post-1989 policies).

Although overwhelmingly positive for most social actors (including religious organisations and most social groups), democratic reforms came at a price. All of the above-mentioned changes and processes occurred and intensified over a short period of time, contributing to increased social tensions and conflicts. Most of the old institutions and organisations either left the stage (the PZPR) or had to redefine themselves (Solidarity), and new social forces emerged (political parties, NGOs, religious groups). Tensions and conflicts built up in the religious sphere of Poland's social life, both in its private and public dimensions.

### **Religion and the Church in the new reality**

The fall of communism therefore caused a major change in the position of religion and religious organisations in Polish public life. As I explained in the previous chapter, religion was legally banned from pre-1989 politics, and religious organisations were largely persecuted and discriminated against. The existence of minority religions and groups in the People's Republic of Poland was limited on at least two levels: religious freedom and the degree of minority rights. Communist authorities rejected the notion of the public visibility of religion and restricted it to the private sphere, thereby handicapping the activities of religious communities—particularly small ones that relied on closely knit community relations for their existence. In addition, the communist authorities often pursued nationalist and xenophobic policies that further discriminated against minority groups. The Kielce Pogrom of 1946 (resulting in the mass exodus of Polish Jews), Operation Vistula (which forced the re-settlement of ethnic Ukrainians—mostly Orthodox and Greek Catholics—in southeast Poland in 1947) and the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in 1950, are but a few examples of the persecution of minority religions and

communities in communist Poland, which left them small and weak both in terms of numbers as well as organised representation (Dirksen 2002). This contributed to the PRCC's inexperience in dealing with multiculturalism and the differentiation of world views which would be a major part of the new reality. In the new democratic system, one of the main challenges facing the Church was adjusting to religious pluralism and embracing the nascent civil society that allowed different social movements, previously suppressed by communist governments, to emerge in public life. The historical experiences of Polish Catholicism, especially those of the communist period, did not adequately prepare the PRCC for such a change.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the PRCC under communism was greatly influenced by its leader and Primate of Poland between 1953 and 1981, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński. His vision of Catholicism was based on a historical conception of the Polish nation, stemming from the 19<sup>th</sup>-century romantic notion of heroic Polish Catholicism fighting against hostile external forces. In this vision, Catholicism became a principal identity marker under a foreign-imposed, communist rule (Zubrzycki 1997:43). During the Great Novena in the 1950s and 1960s, a new and alternative discourse created by the Catholic Church made Catholic ritual a central expression of freedom, without much regard for non-believers and other faith traditions.

The Church's inability to interact or co-operate with minority religions and groups was linked to its ambiguous stance towards civil society in general. Although civil society in its liberal form only started functioning in post-1989 Poland, the roots of the PRCC's attitude towards it went back a few decades further. As the previous chapter has illustrated, although the PRCC supported opposition politics and voiced its dissent from the communist government's policies, it typically co-operated with the regime each time that it might secure the Church's privileges and institutional interests, even at the expense of other groups. In the 1980s, the PRCC's unique position as a partner of both Solidarity and the government facilitated political negotiations, and enabled it to act as a creative force driving civil society and the new democratic regime. This

position was reinforced by the fact that in the face of a complete collapse of the ruling party and an almost complete reshuffle of parliamentary and governmental structures, the Church's leadership remained unchanged throughout 1989 and well into the new democratic reality, and the PRCC was the only institution relatively unaffected by the rapid change.

For all this, the PRCC was both inexperienced and unprepared for interaction with minority religions and groups; nevertheless, the inability to communicate and co-operate with external bodies was not the only challenge the Church faced. After years of consolidating opposition forces and acting as the sole voice of independent society, the Church was exposed to very little criticism. This was due to a number of reasons. First of all, the Polish Church had always been a highly clericalised institution, and laymen (including members of the general public) played a minor role in its policy and decision-making. Second, at the time of communist rule there were no other independent social organisations that could challenge the PRCC's actions. This gave the Church hierarchy a virtual monopoly on non-state discourse. Third, the Church had, and has, a conservative, elitist and authoritarian structure, and decades of paternalistic, aggressive rhetoric—directed mostly against the state, but also against opposition and other organisations—resulted in a complete lack of flexibility and adaptability to the new social landscape. Finally, the post-communist legacy of the PRCC made it difficult to adjust to the new reality, as the developments of the 1989-1993 period will clearly show.

### **Religion and democratic elections: 1989-1993**

The first four years of Poland's democratic transformation were rich in political events—first and foremost, a series of parliamentary, local and presidential elections that led to a major exchange of political elites. After the first partly democratic election in June 1989, four more popular votes took place within a period of only four years. In May 1990, the first democratic local-

government elections took place across the country. In November 1990, Poles chose their first democratically elected president. As early as 1991, the participants in the first semi-democratic *Sejm* decided to dissolve this body and call for fully free elections, which took place in October 1991. The first term of Poland's democratic parliament was also interrupted by a political crisis and another early vote in September 1993. All of the above events obviously occurred within a short period of time, which would be unusual and challenging even for a developed democracy. But Poland was at a very early stage of reforming its political institutions, and these frequent changes in the political landscape brought about instability, and had profound consequences for Poland's later political life.

At the time, though, the lack of strong political institutions and relevant democratic procedures, combined with the weakness of civil society organisations, facilitated the Church's involvement in mainstream politics in the immediate post-1989 transformation period. As described in Chapter 3 (and earlier in this chapter), the historical legacy of the communist period, notably the suppression of the PRCC's public profile, made the Church eager to enter the political arena during the first pre-election campaign in early 1989.

The June 1989 elections were exceptional in many ways. The two main contenders were the PZPR and the Solidarity opposition. The elections were seen as more than a simple vote, but rather as a referendum on the communist regime and a symbolic expression of disapproval for the current system. Considering the close links between the Church and Solidarity in the communist period, the PRCC's involvement in the elections was expected, and was initially judged in moral, not political terms: the PRCC was seen as a mentor of the Solidarity movement, and thus entitled to 'help'. The sudden appearance of the PRCC as a political force, however, surprised even those usually sympathetic to the Church's involvement in public life (Zielińska 2008). A third of all running candidates (mostly from the Solidarity list) declared some sort of allegiance to the Church and affiliation with its institutions (Wałęsa 1990:142), and it turned out that they could count on very concrete support in return. It was soon deemed normal by top-

level politicians to involve and consult with the PRCC leadership on matters of government policy. In May 1989, Primate Glemp hosted a meeting for Solidarity's leadership, including Lech Wałęsa (the future first democratically elected president of Poland), Tadeusz Mazowiecki (the future first democratic prime-minister) and Andrzej Stelmachowski (the future first speaker of the Senate), amongst others. During the meeting, the Primate was briefed on the imminent elections and challenges lying ahead for Solidarity; he presented his comments on the nature of democratic politics and mentioned issues relevant to the PRCC's agenda (Prymas 1989).

At the same time, most parishes turned into local electoral headquarters of Solidarity. Clergy actively participated in selecting opposition candidates, and assisted them in running their campaigns by giving material support and advice. This is particularly important in view of the fact that Solidarity candidates had already started displaying vital ideological differences among themselves—a feature the PRCC used to pursue its own agenda, notably to increase its leverage on the political process. Some individuals representing more radical opposition organisations, such as the KPN and Fighting Solidarity ('Solidarność Walcząca', SW), which did not enjoy a good relationship with the Church, were not added to the list. In the city of Radom in central Poland, for instance, Jan Józef Lipski, a hero of the democratic opposition and a devoted socialist, had to compete in the run-off to the Senate with a right-wing candidate supported by the local bishop. In many other cities and regions, local Solidarity candidates had to face 'friendly fire' from representatives of small, Christian-democratic organisations and groups that did not belong to the mainstream of pre-1989 opposition, but which were supported by the Church (Gawin 1999:53).

On the other hand, many Christian-democratic and nationalist opposition figures protested against the inclusion of more liberal and left-leaning candidates, believing they were not deserving of equal representation on Solidarity's list. This was a reflection of old disputes within the Solidarity movement, for the most part silenced during the anti-communist struggle.

The main debate related to the very character of Solidarity as a trade union, a political movement, a moral force and a coalition of ideologically distant groups and individuals. By reaching out to the majority of Polish society, and with a membership base of over ten million during its peak popularity period, common ground for Solidarity membership was rather slight—its basic elements being opposition to communism, on whatever grounds, and a will to achieve an independent, democratic state. Perhaps as a consequence, the post-communist reality was not widely debated before the transformation, and so Solidarity was ill-equipped to pursue independent policies. The main bone of contention was whether it was to remain a broadly social movement, go back to its trade union roots or transform into a political party. This debate continued throughout the 1990s, and eventually led to the disintegration of the Solidarity movement into an array of political groups and organisations (see Dabertowa 2005).

What concerns us most, however, is the second big debate, relating to the PRCC's relationship with Solidarity. The Church was perceived as one of the main institutional backers of the movement in the pre-1989 reality. Now that Solidarity was deciding on its own future and was able to operate freely in a democratic society, the PRCC had to re-evaluate its policy. On the one hand, some forces within Solidarity were strongly supportive of the Church (although some opposed it very firmly, and the movement itself consisted of Catholics, members of other faith communities and atheists). On the other hand, the PRCC never decided whether it was a part of the movement, its supporter or its mentor, or even whether it was an arbiter in communications with the communist government. This made its role in the post-communist environment in relation to Solidarity a challenging task, as it often had to face stark choices in its relationship with the movement.

This was a watershed moment for the PRCC, as it now entered the new democratic reality as a political force, a civil society actor and a religious movement. As the emerging environment led to the pluralisation of political forces and the creation of new political movements not aligned with the old 'communists vs. Solidarity' divide, the Church had to decide



whether it would give up its role as Solidarity's sponsor or as a political actor in general. As the Church's statements and actions in the preceding months had shown, it was not willing to give up its unique (strong) status for the sake of fostering Poland's transition to a liberal democracy.

As the Church chose a policy of active involvement in party and government politics, its influence on candidate lists and its support for particular groups and individuals went beyond working alongside the candidates and parties themselves. Many local priests mobilised their parishioners to participate in elections, and instructed them on how to vote and whom to support. Cases of direct support for particular candidates and groups, typically rendered by the local provost during a Sunday Mass, were not unheard of. Interestingly enough, direct pre-electoral support was promoted mainly in this way: i.e. by local provosts, at parish level, and not by the Episcopate itself. As it had been in communist times, the Episcopate remained the voice of restraint and reason. This meant that, even though there had historically been significant differences between local parish politics and the Episcopate, the gap had actually widened in the post-1989 reality. As described above, local clergy actively supported Solidarity politicians and got involved in pre-electoral agitation, but the national Church authorities seemed surprised with this development: Primate Glemp himself admitted that he did not 'recognise' his priests, and did not 'know what got into them' (Czywczyk and Śmigielńska 1990:148). These differences would be similarly marked in subsequent elections, in 1990-1993 (see below).

Establishing the extent of the PRCC's reach in the 1989 elections is almost impossible, but it is important to mention that even the PZPR Politburo was astonished at the level of support showered upon Solidarity by the Church (at the local level), and blamed the latter for its defeat: 'it turned out that parishes have overwhelmingly joined the campaign in supporting opposition candidates. Participation of parishes not only provided an organisational infrastructure for opposition (...) but was of great influence on the voters' opinions and attitudes' (Perzkowski 1994:449).

Solidarity's sweeping victory in 1989—winning all 35% of the available *Sejm* seats (the remaining 65% were reserved for PZPR candidates) and 99 of the Senate seats—presented the PRCC with new leverage within the political establishment, an opportunity the Church was eager to seize.

The local government elections in May that year reaffirmed the Church's involvement in politics at all levels. Once again, Solidarity candidates had to stand against each other, with liberal and independent candidates opposing the groups officially sponsored by the Church. An example from Łódź, the second-largest Polish city and an important industrial hub, illustrates the importance of the PRCC's support. The Regional Civic Committee ('Wojewódzki Komitet Obywatelski') faced the Church-supported Łódź Civic Agreement ('Łódzkie Porozumienie Obywatelskie'), with the latter winning an overwhelming majority of 62.5% of the votes (Kowalski 1990:77). The local elections were also the first time when the PRCC started referring to the candidates' personal religious convictions as a decisive factor in choosing the right one, which was to be a common occurrence in the years to come. In an early May issue of *Pismo Okólne* ('The Circular', PO), the Episcopate called on the faithful to make sure that 'people elected to public and political service would bear witness to human and evangelic values. (...) One should not think that the attitude of religious neutrality (...) cannot be considered. (...) Only people with a strong conscience can serve the community well' (PO 30.04.-06.05. 1990).

The first parliamentary and local government elections were a prelude to a major struggle surrounding the upcoming presidential election that ultimately involved the Church. According to the 1989 Round Table Agreement, the communists had the right to elect their 'own' president, and in July 1989 General Wojciech Jaruzelski was duly elected by parliament. Although he was initially chosen for a five-year term, after the first democratic reforms were implemented the social pressure for his resignation mounted very fast. His rival, Wałęsa, who was the leader of parliamentary opposition and of the Solidarity trade union, entrusted Jarosław Kaczyński (who became Poland's prime minister in 2006—see next chapter) with the task of

forming a new government. The biggest controversy related to the possibility of a coalition between Solidarity and the communists. Solidarity's shortlist of candidates for the prime minister's office included Bronisław Geremek, a left-leaning intellectual and oppositionist, and Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a fellow Solidarity figure with a strong liberal Catholic profile. In a 1991 interview, Kaczyński contended that the final choice was only made in favour of Mazowiecki due to the Church's support: 'It was also known, that Mazowiecki will be liked by the Church and it played a certain role. In Wałęsa's eyes it was a serious trump. (...) Geremek would be less welcome by the Church' (Odwrotna 1991:46). On August 17 1989, Wałęsa met with Primate Glemp to discuss the election of a new prime-minister, and only four days later Mazowiecki was installed with a coalition government involving both communist and Solidarity politicians.

This was a good example of clientelist behaviour expressed through the mobilisation of a religious group, corresponding to Casanova's typology of behaviour of religious organisations in a deprivatised environment (Casanova 1994:218; see also Chapter 1). The Church's preference for Mazowiecki was an important consideration for Wałęsa, who knew that by choosing the PRCC's preferred candidate he could in turn count on the Church's support in this difficult time.

After what had been a period of (purported) unity in the Solidarity camp, and following intense negotiations with the communist government members, Mazowiecki fell out with Wałęsa, who favoured fast tracking economic and social reforms and a more radical approach to dealing with the weakening communists. This was a major division in the Solidarity camp. With Wałęsa and Mazowiecki both having close links to the Church, however, the Episcopate promptly offered help with mediating the conflict. This scenario resembled the procedures that had been in place in communist Poland, with the PRCC negotiating between government and opposition; the only difference was that now Poland was a new-born democracy, and the conflicting parties were central to government politics. And so, despite a regime change, and

even an ideology and system change, the PRCC's role in the political life of the country remained unchallenged.

Between February and July 1990, bishops Alojzy Orszulik, Tadeusz Gocłowski and Bronisław Dąbrowski hosted a series of meetings with Wałęsa and Mazowiecki, trying to mitigate the conflict and prevent deepening the rift between Solidarity factions. The potential split of the opposition camp into two opposing groups was not the only issue at stake. With the growing dissatisfaction of society with the Round-Table Agreement, and more radical demands for the communists' total withdrawal from political life, new presidential elections were on the horizon. Both Wałęsa and Mazowiecki considered running in the elections. Mazowiecki initially enjoyed the PRCC's support, and some of his allies sought to use his influence on the Church to convince Wałęsa, a declared Catholic, not to compete in the upcoming presidential race. Meetings between PRCC officials, Vatican diplomats and government and opposition figures were frequent and open. Nobody tried to hide the fact that current political issues were at the heart of those meetings. No other faith communities or civil society organisations had the opportunity to influence the government on such a scale.

Following the developments of early 1990, then, we can conclude that Church forces tried to play the conflicting sides against each other to achieve maximum leverage on state structures and politicians. This confirmed the Church's willingness to maintain its exclusive status as not only a civil society actor or a religious movement, but as a key political participant. It also further confirmed that both the Church and political figures, particularly those linked to Solidarity, decided to stick with their pre-1989 behavioural patterns. This path of mutual dependence meant that, despite a changing political reality, religious and political actors conspired and secretly co-operated as if under conditions of oppression and discrimination, as they had before 1989.

With pressure mounting on Jaruzelski, and the governmental crisis deepening, the Church-government meetings became a regular feature of Poland's political life. In mid-June

1990, Wałęsa met Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, the Vatican's Secretary of State; the meeting was a source of numerous media leaks about a supposed message from the Pope that the Cardinal handed to Wałęsa as a sign of John Paul II's growing frustration with the political impasse. Only two weeks afterwards, the so-called 'lettergate' broke. This time, Mazowiecki was the centre of attention after his office announced that he had indeed received a letter from the Pope. The way the press release was edited suggested that the Pope was voicing his support for Mazowiecki in the conflict with Wałęsa. It transpired, however, that it was just a courtesy letter, and Wałęsa received a very similar document (Kurski 2008:92).

Yet, although it seems that the Vatican's supposed meddling in Polish politics was very much an issue of misinterpretation, the Holy See was careful not to denounce the use of its correspondence for political means, and this contributed to the impression that the Church was a key political player in the run-up to the presidential election. This impression was reaffirmed when John Paul II hosted Wałęsa at a private audience in August 1990; the latter contended that the Supreme Pontiff was interested in the aims of his political campaign, and that he 'defused [Wałęsa's] doubts and complexes' (Wałęsa 1990:213). The PRCC's national structures complemented the Vatican's policy: the PRCC hosted frequent (separate) meetings for Wałęsa, Mazowiecki and other politicians over July, August and September 1990—that is, during the peak of the governmental crisis. The animosity between Wałęsa and Mazowiecki now ran deep: in early August, Wałęsa employed Mazowiecki's key adversary, Andrzej Micewski, as the head of his advisory team. Micewski was a conservative Catholic journalist who had been in a state of open conflict with Mazowiecki over his liberal convictions, since both had been active in the PAX movement in the 1950s.

During one of the Church-facilitated meetings, on September 18 1990, President Jaruzelski announced that he would bow to social pressure and voluntarily give up his office. This announcement was first made public after the meeting, hosted by Primate Glemp, and the following day Jaruzelski formally confirmed his resignation (Odwrotna 1991:132).

Characteristically, Wałęsa, conscious of the negative attitude towards his candidacy within the Episcopate, announced his formal intention to run for president on the eve of the September 18 meeting. Once Jaruzelski had resigned and the new presidential elections had been announced for late November, the PRCC capitalised on its political leverage and got involved at the very centre of the campaign.

In the early stages, only two contenders attracted significant popular support: Wałęsa and Mazowiecki. Even though only a few weeks earlier Wałęsa had been an unwelcome candidate, once he was opposed by the liberal Mazowiecki the PRCC's preference changed in favour of the Solidarity leader. Wałęsa was known for his admiration of the Pope, his belief in traditional values and a more nationally centred vision of the state. Although officially the Church remained neutral, the split between central authorities and local clergy, so visible during the 1989 parliamentary campaign, was resurfacing. Many local parishes acted as electoral headquarters for Wałęsa's staff, and priests called upon their parishioners to support Wałęsa (Gowin 1999:28-30). And long before Mazowiecki joined the presidential race, he was an object of a smear campaign in the right-wing press and other media (possibly motivated by the Church), suggesting that he was actually Jewish and that he hid his 'true' identity. Once Mazowiecki started his campaign, the attacks intensified. His opponents suggested that his Jewish origins made him ineligible to run the country.

The rumours were reminiscent of the worst traditions of Polish pre-war anti-Semitism that had been spread by *Endecja* (the national-democratic movement) and extremist circles within the Church itself. The Polish Church, having a long track record of anti-Semitism, was still haunted by this legacy. Many local priests, and some members of the Episcopate, quietly agreed with the allegations against Mazowiecki and preferred not to touch upon this issue any further. The Episcopal authorities, however, decided to issue a prompt rebuttal of the anti-Semitic campaign. The Deputy Secretary of the Episcopate said in an interview for *Tygodnik Powszechny* that 'using (...) anti-Semitism for the sake of the electoral campaign is regrettable and

should be condemned' (Gebert 1991:260). This was a rare occurrence of a prompt and direct rebuttal of anti-Semitic actions arising from within the PRCC's lower ranks. Numerous further examples of anti-Semitic behaviour, including the case of Radio Maryja (see below), show that this was not a symptom of a major policy change of the PRCC towards anti-Semitism, however.

In addition to the anti-Semitic campaign against Mazowiecki, the presidential campaign was characterised by its religious content, and the PRCC remained a key player. It is important to note that the religious strand of the campaign did not pertain solely to the actors and institutions involved, but also to the discursive character of the process. A significant strand of attack on Mazowiecki's credibility was based on the argument that, despite his purported Catholicism, he was a communist and an enemy of the Church. The attack was based on the distribution of an article he wrote in 1953 for *Wrocławski Tygodnik Katolicki* ('Wrocław Catholic Weekly'), criticising Bishop Czesław Kaczmarek of Kielce, who had been sentenced by the communists in a show-trial for supposed anti-government activity (Żaryn 2003:88).

While religious circles and the media determined that the struggle between Wałęsa and Mazowiecki, both legendary opposition figures, was the key to rallying the Church's support and securing victory, a third candidate entered the stage and changed the rules of the game. Stanisław Tymiński was a businessman who had spent most of his life in Latin America, and whose electoral programme was a mixture of economic populism and political newspeak. Some suggested he had links to the communist security apparatus. It was obvious that he had no coherent philosophy and, having no previous history in Poland's political life, he built his support on populist slogans. Tymiński's campaign was entirely secular and he had no links to the Church, and so obviously the clergy did not welcome his candidacy (Wiśniewska 2008).

Despite the emergence of this new figure, the power struggle between the two Solidarity candidates absorbed the PRCC to the extent that it overlooked the potential threat Tymiński posed to the whole opposition movement, and ignored the significance of his appearance in the presidential contest. This was a mistake: in the first round of the election, Tymiński won 23%

of the votes and came second only to Wałęsa, who secured 40% of the votes. The 'war at the top', as it was called, between Wałęsa and Mazowiecki had completely exhausted the Solidarity camp, resulting in a double defeat. First of all, a representative of Solidarity's liberal and intellectual wing was eliminated from the presidential race. Second, the focus on internal Solidarity affairs and the involvement of the Church in the bipartisan conflict resulted in the neglect of other political opponents, and thus the rise of the populist Tymiński.

It was only a week after Mazowiecki's humiliating defeat that the Episcopate issued a stern warning: 'we are aware of the great effort that the nation made under Solidarity's auspices in order to get rid of the totalitarian system's burden. Election of the country's leader is (...) a conclusion of this effort and sacrifice' (Grabowska and Krzemiński 1991:322). The mention of Solidarity in the Episcopate's statement was a clear reference to Wałęsa and an expression of the Church's support for him in the second round of the elections. The importance of this statement is underlined by the fact that Primate Glemp himself reaffirmed it a few days later at a press conference in Rome. Wałęsa won a landslide victory in the second round, with over 74% of the vote in his favour. Acknowledging that his victory owed much to the Church, Wałęsa remained its closest ally throughout his term. He also chose the Jasna Góra monastery in Częstochowa as his first destination as president-elect; on December 11 he renewed his vows to the Virgin Mary as a token of gratitude for winning the election (Grabowska and Krzemiński 1991:323). Once in office he also nominated Father Franciszek Cebula, his long-term confessor, as his personal chaplain. One of the chaplain's duties was to personally review all official statements made in relation to the Church; this showed to what extent the PRCC controlled state policy in the early years of transformation (Rabiej and Rosińska 1993:220).

Because of Tymiński's enigmatic and Jaruzelski's communist past, the Church's decision to openly support Wałęsa in the second round of the elections was not widely criticised. Public opinion saw it as a continuation of the first wave of free elections in 1989, and the Church's actions were seen as a fulfilment of moral obligations and a necessary compromise: Church



neutrality asserted for the sake of the greater good, i.e. the victory of a Solidarity candidate (Gowin 1999:55).

There was little excuse, however, for the Church's continued interest in government and party politics after Wałęsa's victory in December 1990. The first fully democratic parliamentary elections, in 1991, were run in the context of a stable political system, and provided a relatively even playing field for all the running parties and groups. Despite this fact, and despite the numerous calls from civil society organisations that principal democratic rules should be observed during the election, the PRCC became deeply involved in the campaign (Gowin 1999:50-60). This was in many ways an echo of the 1989 and 1990 campaigns, but this time the PRCC drew conclusions from its past experiences and devised a more coherent strategy.

Throughout 1991, the Episcopate issued a regular series of statements, published in *Pismo Okólne*, pertaining to democracy, elections and the duties of a Catholic voter. The tone and content of the statements ranged from general remarks about democracy to precise instructions about voting behaviour. In February 1991, the Episcopate 'obliged lay Catholics not only to participate in elections, but also to cover for candidates able to take up responsible duties for the country and organise those political forces that can efficiently express the will and convictions of the believers' (PO 1991a). Later on, the Episcopate 'noted with appreciation that the tendencies bringing together Christian groups are more and more visible' (PO 1991a). In another issue, Polish bishops contended that 'For no-one, and especially not for the believer, can it be a matter of indifference what the political community in which he will fulfil his life's purpose will be [like]' (PO 36/91, in Borowik 2002:243). These statements confirmed the PRCC's attitude and persistent meddling both with elections and politics in general. Despite its claims to the contrary, the PRCC continued to be involved in the electoral process, even though the communist threat it had previously referred to had disappeared and the political system's stability was not in immediate danger. The Church chose to follow the path of being a censor

of the political system as it was in the pre-1989 reality, only that now the system was open and democratic and needed no such censor.

Other statements, issued in *Pismo Okólne* on the eve of the October 1991 parliamentary elections, were marked by two important features. First, they focused on the PRCC's position regarding parties, programmes and candidates. In other letters, the Episcopate listed in detail the characteristics of candidates who were understood to be in agreement with 'objective Christian ethics'. They were to be 'honest and wise, [and] accept the Evangelic system of values and the Polish Christian tradition' (PO 1991c), as well as prepared to 'guarantee to retain the identity of the Nation and its Christian values' (1991d) and 'speak clearly in the defence of life from the moment of conception' (1991e). The negative features of candidates were also described. They were not to be:

- arguing against catechism in school; the PRCC spoke against those who 'having regained the law of God in Polish schools try to create a heretic's state', because 'can we trust them in the future?' (PO 38/91);
- supportive of state neutrality in religious affairs; the PRCC objected to systems which 'under the pretext of a neutral world-view, remove God from the structure' (PO 36/91);
- 'stand[ing] outside the Polish Christian tradition' (PO 35/91).

(Borowik 2002:243)

The Episcopate also actively lobbied for its preferred model of church-state relations. The September issue of *Pismo Okólne* (2-8.09.1991) alleged that the Church felt challenged by those who accused it of political meddling. In response, the Episcopate underlined that Catholics had the 'obligation and right' to defend Christian values in public life, just as other communities had the right to defend theirs. Furthermore, the Episcopate contended that 'we

[The Episcopate] do not support any of the sides [in political disputes]. We do not indicate any electoral lists'. And they insisted that the clergy is 'obliged not to allow electoral campaign to enter churches and chapels and [the clergy] does not take part in the campaign' (PO 1991f). Further down the same document, bishops condemned totalitarian regimes, and added that: 'Not only totalitarianism but also a purportedly ideologically neutral regime that gets rid of God in its structures is not to be accepted' (PO 1991f). This particular vision of church-state relations echoed the sermon of John Paul II during his June 1991 visit to Poland, and thereby suggested that the PRCC's actions were getting approval from the Vatican, which only reinforced the Church's intervention in domestic politics (Jackowski 1993:132). Quite importantly, the statements contained in recent Church publications (such as those about 'neutral regimes' not being accepted) and lack of clear guidelines from the Pope reinforced the impression that the Church wanted to be an active political player, and that it was determined to challenge the liberal democratic assumption of a secular state.

Clearly, the Church was unwilling to withdraw from politics; furthermore, the principle of religious neutrality of the state did not entirely sit easily with the PRCC's agenda. This agenda, so clearly outlined in *Pismo Okólne* and elsewhere, was translated into the reality of the electoral campaign. The Christian-National Union ('Zjednoczenie Chrześcijańsko-Narodowe', ZchN), a major right-wing party close to the Church, formed an alliance with minor right-wing organisations called Catholic Electoral Action ('Wyborcza Akcja Katolicka', WAK), clearly referring to its members' religious views. Canon law only permits the use of the word 'Catholic' in reference to official Church structures, and so WAK's name suggested that the group had official backing from the Church. WAK used the Church infrastructure during the campaign alongside other right-wing groups. The campaign itself grew increasingly fierce, and right-wing and nationalist groups often declared that they represented the symbolic struggle between good (Catholic) and evil (secular, communist). The Church was eager to pick up this rhetoric, and also presented the vote as if it were a referendum on moral values. A local priest referred to the

election as a choice between Jesus and Barabbas (the biblical fellow inmate of Jesus) (Pach 1991); although this was a rare example of such radical rhetoric employed by a single clergyman, the PRCC authorities were very close to its ideological position.

This was an interesting shift from the 1989 elections, where a rift became visible between the hot-headed local priests and the more reserved central authorities. This suggested a growing Church radicalism. Bishop Michalik, an influential member of the Conference of the Episcopate, said a month before the elections that 'A Catholic is obliged to vote for a Catholic, a Christian for a Christian, a Muslim for a Muslim, and a Jew for Jew' (Michalik 1991). Even though the bishop later stressed that his intention was to underline the idea that voters should cast their votes in accordance with their convictions, many saw it as a voice of sectarianism, and another attempt to introduce religion as a political category, especially in view of the Church's involvement in politics since 1989. Other commentators pointed out the statement's anti-Semitic character—particularly as PRCC officials were previously embroiled in anti-Semitic scandals, including the Mazowiecki controversy in 1990 (Gebert 1991:260).

A final blow to whatever was left of the Church's credibility as a neutral observer of democratic processes followed shortly after Michalik's statement. An October communiqué of the Conference of the Episcopate urged that 'only [those] political groups, that clearly defend right to life (...), respect the laws of the family (...) and respect for [Poland's] traditions stemming from Christian roots—should be given a mandate of believers' (PO 1991g). Further on in the same document, the Church leaders urged voters to 'rally around those few electoral committees that support values in accordance with Christian ethics and Catholic social teaching' (PO 1991g).

The communiqué was at the heart of one of the biggest scandals in church-state relations in the early 1990s. It appeared that letters sent by some diocesan curiae, acting as regional distributors of the document, contained an attachment with a list of the 'few electoral committees' that should be supported by Catholics. The document was unsigned, and was addressed to 'pastors and faithful—do not provide this information from the pulpit' (Gowin

1999:58). The exact circumstances of the list's creation and distribution were never fully explained. The Conference of the Episcopate did not discuss any such list officially. No reference to it was made in the communiqué. The fact that the list was widely distributed among parishes across the whole country suggests that at least some officials at the Conference must have been aware of it. *Tygodnik Powszechny* believed that Primate Glemp himself must have known about the document (Boniecki 1991). Following reports confirming that the list was indeed circulated among local priests, and that they used their Sunday sermons (the elections were held on a Sunday) to campaign for certain parties and candidates, only aggravated reaction to the affair. Campaigning during election day is and was against the law. That the crime was perpetrated by representatives of the purportedly neutral PRCC only made things worse. Nor was the campaign limited to identifying 'suitable' candidates, but also involved attacks on those not supported by the PRCC. Interestingly enough, the party most viciously attacked by the Church was the Democratic Union ('Unia Demokratyczna', UD), a left-leaning opposition party originating from the Solidarity movement. This is remarkable given that the UD enjoyed strong support from the Catholic intelligentsia, and the PRCC's slander campaign led to a deterioration in relations within the Catholic community, and deepened the rift between the more conservative, right-wing parties, such as ZChN, and liberal ones, such as the UD and the Labour Union ('Unia Pracy', UP), most of which also stemmed from Solidarity (Kościół 1991).

The right-wing and Catholic parties enjoyed considerable electoral success in the October 1991 elections, with WAK coming in third after the UD and the post-communist party, followed by Centre Agreement ('Porozumienie Centrum', PC) (fourth) and the KPN (fifth). The three right-wing parties were supported by 25% of all voters and secured almost a third of parliamentary seats (Kozłowski 2010). The new government was based on a coalition of right-wing parties led by Jan Olszewski from the Centre Agreement. Olszewski was a devout supporter of the Church, and openly declared his allegiance to the PRCC. He visited the Vatican

on his first foreign trip, where he met with John Paul II, who blessed Olszewski as the 'breakthrough prime minister' (*Tygodnik* 1992).

The October 1991 elections were a real triumph for the PRCC and its political agenda. It was also the most comprehensive example of the Church's political offensive: from supporting right-wing political parties in their electoral campaign, to directly influencing the election outcomes through politicisation of the pulpit on election day, and subsequently to co-operating with and lobbying the government in key areas of Church interest. If there were any doubts as to the Church's role—as observer or actor—in post-communist politics, they disappeared with Olszewski's coming to power and the Church's ever-increasing presence in politics. It was clear that the Church would not retreat from its politically active position, developed throughout the 1980s and during the first months of democratic transition.

Olszewski's government had a conservative and strongly anti-communist agenda and pursued pro-Catholic social policies; it enjoyed the Church's support in promoting some of its legislative ideas (e.g. abortion legislation: see further on in this chapter). Olszewski's rise to power agitated Polish politics and exacerbated the internal divisions within the Solidarity camp, as some of its members opposed Olszewski's radical anti-communism, favouring gradual reform. The Church's active engagement in government politics of the Olszewski era can be illustrated by Primate Glemp's involvement in mediating a conflict between Olszewski and Wałęsa. The 'war on top' erupted in spring 1992, when Olszewski's minister of defence, Jan Parys, left the government after a clash with communist generals. Wałęsa's camp had a different vision of the armed forces' reform, and the conflict between president and prime minister threatened the stability of state institutions. Primate Glemp visited the prime minister's office, and later the presidential palace. According to Anusz (1994:259), an active Centre Agreement politician close to Wałęsa, Glemp tried to convince the conflicting politicians to embrace a new, wider parliamentary coalition. It would involve right-wing and agrarian parties and guarantee a stable government that would follow the social teachings of the Catholic Church.

Unfortunately for Glemp, the conflict got out of hand after a government minister accused Wałęsa of being a communist secret-service informant. Olszewski's government fell amidst accusations of a witch hunt and the extreme politicisation of the state apparatus. The Episcopate issued a communiqué supporting lustration policies (aimed at removing former communist security-service informants and functionaries from government and civil service), thereby siding with Olszewski and further humiliating Wałęsa (Jackowski 1992:65).

Olszewski's failure to implement a fully-fledged lustration process cemented the collapse of the Solidarity camp. Left-leaning and secular-minded figures such as Adam Michnik, chief editor of *Gazeta Wyborcza* ('Electoral Gazette', GW) and Tadeusz Mazowiecki condemned Olszewski—and, indirectly, the Church—for meddling in politics (*Sacrum* 1992). The scandalous involvement of the PRCC in the 1991 elections, and the failed attempt at maintaining a right-wing coalition in 1992, had long-term consequences for Polish politics and the Church. Olszewski's government is seen by some as having been the first truly non-communist government, and many right-wing parties have built conspiracy theories out of its fall in June 1992 and the subsequent return of post-communists to power (see Chapter 5). Moreover, an almost universal contempt for the Church's direct involvement in elections and government politics expressed by major political parties and media led to a reorientation of the PRCC's policy in respect of democratic processes and church-state relations.

After the fall of Olszewski's government, Wałęsa entrusted Waldemar Pawlak of the Polish Peasant Party with the mission of forming a government. After Pawlak's failure the task was passed on to Hanna Suchocka, representing the right wing of the UD. Both candidates were close to the Church. Pawlak was the head of the PSL, a party that the Episcopate saw as an important pillar of the nationalist-agrarian coalition it had tried to help realise in 1991. Suchocka was a conservative politician who went on to become Poland's ambassador to the Holy See (see Chapter 5). Suchocka's government remained in power for just over a year; political instability and bargaining between coalition parties and the president resulted in a no-confidence vote in

the parliament's lower chamber in May 1993. The fact that the no-confidence vote against a Solidarity government was inspired by the Solidarity trade union because it had failed to reach an agreement with the government on public-sector pay effectively sealed the fate of the Solidarity movement. New elections, which had been scheduled less than two years after the previous vote in September 1993, were a clear indication of the political volatility of the newly independent state (Gebethner 1995).

The Church's revised position towards upcoming elections was marked by a lack of explicit support for any of the major contenders, including the main right-wing parties. This did not mean that the Episcopate gave up on the idea of voicing its pre-electoral concerns publicly, nor that the local clergy abstained from actively supporting candidates and groups close to the Church. It merely meant that, following the disastrous consequences of the 1991 campaign, the Church decided to act in a more subtle way and to moderate its discourse. A communiqué issued after the 261<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Episcopate in May 1993 contended that Christian values are embedded within universal values based on natural law and, therefore, they can be embraced by everyone, regardless of their religious or moral convictions. Furthermore, the document proclaimed the Church to be the guardian of 'moral order', and, as such, a body concerned with the programmes of political parties and government policies in order to secure basic values and human rights. The bishops underlined the historical importance of Christianity and Polish culture, and maintained that Christian values were at the core of national identity. Last but not least, the Episcopate listed the basic Christian values, such as human life, human dignity and the protection of life from the moment of conception, amongst others (Komunikat 1993). The document reaffirmed the Church's will to be actively involved in democratic processes in the country, and to include religious matters in the political agenda.

The central authorities of the Polish Church did not, then, become directly involved in promoting particular parties or programmes during the 1993 campaign. Nevertheless, local Church hierarchs did not refrain from engaging in political bargaining. Because of a change in



the electoral law, introducing a 5% threshold needed for parties to enter parliament, small groups had no chance of electoral success. The biggest pro-Church coalition to contest the elections, Fatherland ('Ojczyzna'), was brought to life with the backing of Archbishop Gocłowski of Gdańsk. It included ZChN and three minor right-wing parties. In Warsaw, Father Józef Maj, a priest with a long record of anti-communist activity, and the chaplain of many political prisoners in the communist era, facilitated talks between three conservative parties, including Centre Agreement. The talks were held at the parsonage of Saint Catherine's church in Warsaw, where Maj was a provost (Anusz 1994:261). Even though the negotiations ended in fiasco, they were vivid proof of the PRCC's continued active involvement in politics and keen interest in exercising influence on parties and members of parliament.

It should be noted that the PRCC's desire to co-operate closely with political parties was not one-sided. During the 1993 campaign, many candidates spoke openly about their allegiance to the Church and their respect for its teachings. ZChN's programme was filled with passages almost copy-pasted from the communiqués and statements of the Episcopate. Issues such as morality, public order and upholding Christian values were of primary importance in the party's policy documents (Wielowieyska and Załuska 1993). The presence of Christian values and allegiance to the Church in a right-wing, Christian party are hardly surprising, but the list of Catholic zealots included parties that, at least by definition, should not have displayed a strongly religious profile. PSL, an agrarian party and heir to the communist United Peasant Party ('Zjednoczone Stronnictwo Ludowe', ZSL), was equally zealous in praising the role of the Catholic Church in Poland's history and as a defender of the national interest (Rejer 1993). The same applied to Andrzej Lepper, a farmer turned political revolutionary, and later deputy prime minister in Jarosław Kaczyński's government (see Chapter 5). Lepper founded Self-Defence ('Samoobrona', SO), a trade union and political party, in January 1992. His programme was a mixture of socialist and etatist economic policies with populist slogans. Even though Lepper most often praised the communist period as the golden era of Polish farming, and criticised the

free market, his rhetoric was full of references to Church, Catholicism and national identity: 'One cannot imagine Polish national culture without (...) Catholicism. It is the Church that allowed us, Poles, to defend our national identity' (Ul 1993). Lepper often quoted John Paul II's remark that capitalism cannot be the only alternative to communism, and declared that wanting to 'be a Christian in *Samobrona*'s activities means (...) to refer to the social ramifications of the Gospel and papal teachings' (Ul 1993). Even the left-leaning UD decided to join in the struggle against a secular state. Its representatives claimed that the Church's aim was to stand up for society's moral values, support state reforms and remind church-goers about their civic duties (Aduszkiewicz 2000:354-356).

The only major political force that voiced its concerns about the continued involvement of the PRCC in politics was the Democratic Left Alliance, the ex-communist party. The SLD's 1993 programme found it unacceptable that 'laws of the state are subdued to religious norms' (Sojusz 1993:4). The fact that the SLD won the election and formed a coalition government with the PSL constituted a major departure from the political climate of 1989-1993, and reshaped the place and role of religion in Polish politics, as those parties favoured a much more secular state and did not want so much Church involvement in politics (see Chapter 5).

The extent of the Church's involvement in the first democratic elections (1989, 1991, 1993) and the incoherent (or muted) response of state and political institutions are a testimony to PRCC's ambivalent attitude to the young Polish democracy. The Church allowed itself to meddle with democratic processes as much as the state and wider public allowed it to do so, and keep as much distance from state and party politics as it had to. What is more, the eagerness with which even big political organisations (notably right-wing ones) resorted to appealing for the Church's help in securing voter's support confirms the Church's strength and continuous influence on public affairs vis-à-vis a weak state apparatus and civil society.

## **Catholic policymaking: education and broadcasting**

As the first part of this chapter illustrates, the PRCC promptly entered the political mainstream of democratic Poland after 1989, and maintained a high visibility and exerted influence over political parties, parliaments and governments. The following section will focus on particular areas of policy-making where the Church exercised this influence to change government policy and foster changes in the law in order to prosecute its goals.

In Poland, education is widely seen as one of the most important areas of the Church's social teachings. After Vatican II, the Catholic Church devoted a lot of attention to all aspects of education and upbringing and underlined the ethical and moral dimension of the educational process (Skorowski 2009:160-174). Establishing the role of religion in the state education system—which in the absence of private education establishments in 1989 accounted for virtually all schools in the country—was one of the top priorities of the Polish Church after the democratic transformation in 1989. The PRCC had already secured a number of privileges in May 1989, when the communist parliament passed a statute on the Church's legal status and religious freedoms (see Chapter 3). The document granted legal status to the Catholic University of Lublin and the theological seminaries run by the PRCC. Furthermore, the Church was granted the right to establish and administer schools and orphanages (Ramet 1995:192). This was merely a framework for the Church's activities, however: indeed, the possibility of running its own educational establishments was of secondary importance to reinstating religious education in public schools. The teaching of Catholic theology and the social doctrine of the Church in state schools had been ended in 1961, but even after that date communist authorities still financed the Academy of Catholic Theology and paid salaries to teachers of religious classes (Daniel 1995:403).

After the election of the first non-communist parliament in June 1989, a wide range of Church institutions and groups started voicing their concerns about the quality of the

communist education system, and expressed the need to reintegrate religious education into the curriculum. The Catholic press started considering legal changes and options for returning to the pre-1961 state of affairs (Krukowski 1990). The Episcopate's communiqué from June 1990 was issued 'unanimously supporting a full return of religious education to schools and the need to guarantee this in the Constitution and the education act' (PO 1991a). A pastoral letter on 'The Return of Catechisation to Polish School' followed shortly afterwards (PO 1991b), along with a detailed background of the Church's demands. The document underlined the historical relationship between catechisation and the history of Poland and its nationhood, and the crucial role Catholicism and Catholic education had played in the struggle for independence. The Episcopate argued that allowing religion back into state schools was a way of righting the wrongs of the communist period. Social and historical arguments were predominant, but the letter also contained a number of religious sentiments: namely that Catholics have the right to study their faith and develop their religious identity and—since education and upbringing are inseparable—that school is the natural environment for teaching religious education. What is more, religious education is an emanation of Christ's teaching, and a natural environment for evangelisation (PO 1991b). This rights-based argument, stemming from the PRCC's integrist<sup>10</sup> stance on the matter, was given full support and recognition by many politicians and state institutions.

Both of the PRCC documents were issued amidst the electoral campaign in which the then prime-minister, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a known liberal Catholic, faced Lech Wałęsa, known for his conservative outlook on religious matters. Facing a challenge both from religious circles and his opponent in the presidential race, Mazowiecki submitted to the demands of the Church, and instructed his minister of education to deal with the matter. In June 1990, the Joint Commission of Government and the Episcopate issued a resolution recommending the return of religious education to schools (Pietrzak 1991:107). On August 2 1990, a consultation took

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<sup>10</sup> An early-20th century term describing the forces opposing modernisation within the Catholic Church.

place between the Episcopate and the government within the framework of the Joint Commission, established to facilitate regular contacts between the two institutions. The Commission's final statement contained a declaration affirming the promise to return religious education to state schools.

This was highly unusual for a number of reasons. First of all, the Commission was not a legislative body—it was not even a state institution. Second, the Catholic Church was the only religious organisation consulted in the process. Other consultation forums, such as the Polish Ecumenical Council, were already in place, and a number of minority religions had reinstated their representative bodies (Beźnic 1997). Even though the government had the opportunity to consult other religious organisations, it did not do so. No other stakeholders were invited. Equally, the PRCC made no attempts to reach out to other religious or non-religious organisations in order to invite them to the consultation process (Dębowski 2008). The day after the publication of the statement, Henryk Samsonowicz, the acting minister of education, signed an instruction that the teaching of religion on a voluntary basis should return to all state primary and secondary schools. This was yet another curiosity. The legal instrument of the minister's choice—an instruction—was the lowest on the scale of legal documents produced at government level; it was not in itself a normative act. After the legality of this choice was later questioned by the Ombudsman and the Constitutional Tribunal (see below), Mazowiecki (2004) later explained that 'religious education was brought back [to school] with due respect for the rule of voluntarism: the school gives an opportunity [to take up religious education] and does not create a duty'. The education minister claimed that 80% of the population supported religion's return to schools, and so his decision was legitimate (Samsonowicz 2007). The instruction did not refer to any other legal documents as its basis, and contained a clause describing it as a temporary act until the new education legislation was in place. Theoretically, the instruction referred to all denominations, but as it was enacted as an initiative of the Joint Commission it was largely understood as a solely Catholic affair.

According to the document, all parents who wished their children to join RE classes should petition the school's authorities. RE was supposed to be taught for two hours a week, and the lessons were officially placed in the class schedule. The manuals and other teaching materials were to be provided by relevant Church authorities. The instruction also included special provisions for Catholic pupils willing to attend church services during teaching hours. Nominating RE teachers was entirely up to the religious authorities. Quite controversially, no formal qualifications were required of RE teachers, except the approval of their religious institution. Yet RE teachers were to enjoy the same pay and benefits given to other teachers, and the state vowed to cover their remuneration (Pietrzak 1991:108).

Public opinion, a number of smaller religious organisations and the Polish Ecumenical Council all voiced their concern about the decision. Most criticism did not surround the introduction of religious education to schools, but the way in which the government decided to take such an important decision, and how it was communicated to the public. Due to pressure from the Polish Ecumenical Council, concerned with the absence of provisions for non-Catholics, the ministry decided to issue an instruction in respect of this on August 24, allowing minority religious groups to organise religious instructions where necessary (Gowin 1999:197-198).

Even still, the Ombudsman, Ewa Łętowska, decided to bring an action against the ministerial instructions before the Constitutional Tribunal, the highest judicial authority in Poland. This was the first step in a long and fierce, legal and discursive battle fought by politicians, lawyers, religious organisations and the public over religious education. Łętowska's first (and not only) action before the Tribunal focused on the decision-making procedure and the legal instrument used by the government. The Ombudsman did not challenge the grounds for introducing religious education in state schools; instead, Łętowska contended that the decision was an infringement of the 1961 law on education that proclaimed the secularity of

state schools, as well as the 1989 laws on the status of the Catholic Church and the constitutional freedom of conscience and religion (Gowin 1995:141-143).

The Ombudsman's action exacerbated the conflict, and all sides engaged in a fierce debate, with religious arguments abounding. The supporters of RE in public schools criticised the Ombudsman's decision in the strongest possible terms. Łętowska was accused of defending the communist legacy and favouring formal law-making over values advocated by religion (Krukowski 1990). She defended her position by claiming that democratic procedures should be observed, and that her action was about defending human rights. The ministry and the Joint Commission, for their part, tried to assure everyone that their decision was right, and that the Ombudsman had no grounds for her action. One of the Commission's statements contended that the instructions only allowed RE classes to take place in school buildings and were voluntary, and therefore did not constitute an alteration of the curriculum (Ratajczak 2006).

The Tribunal's eventual ruling was therefore crucial, and not only because it was the highest legal authority in the country; the ruling was also the first of its kind in a country where democracy had been reintroduced less than two years previously; indeed, it was the first ruling on religion in public life. In January 1991, the Tribunal decided to dismiss the Ombudsman's action and to uphold both of the ministry's instructions on RE. What is more, the Tribunal also decided to engage in the debate on church-state relations and the secular character of the state by challenging both acts that the Ombudsman referred to: the 1961 education legislation and the 1989 church-state acts. The Tribunal's verdict also suggested that lawmakers should develop new legislation on education and church-state relations. In so doing, the Tribunal attracted criticism from prominent lawyers, and was accused of meddling with politics and taking an extreme view on a sensitive matter of national importance (Pietrzak 1991:118).

The Tribunal's ruling reassured politicians and Church alike that their attempts to bring religion into schools would not be challenged. This happened at a crucial time for the shaping of state legislation on education, and the parliamentary debate on state schools. In a July 1991

draft of the Education Act, approved by the *Sejm*, Christian values had been placed in the preamble, and schools were obliged to enable teaching of religion within their premises. The PRCC was still not satisfied, however, as it wanted schools to 'organise' teaching and not just enable it. The lower house of parliament, the *Senat*, sided with the Church on this matter and revised the act, turning 'enabling' into 'organising', and extending parental rights to request religious education classes in secondary schools. The *Sejm*, in turn, refused to consider the *Senat*'s amendments, and the act was suspended in a legislative limbo. Only a year later, with the prospect of leaving the old communist legislation in place, was the stalemate brought to an end. In September 1991, the currently binding legislation was adopted. It contained both the Christian values clause in the preamble, as well as the obligation for schools to 'organise' religious education, thus fulfilling all of the Church's demands in that respect and confirming its authority in policy-making (Gowin 1999:199-200).

Both the Church and the politicians supporting it were prompt to capitalise on the new legislation. The reservations of the Ombudsman, presented in 1991, had been dismissed as invalid. The new minister of education, Andrzej Stelmachowski, was a close friend of Primate Glemp, and was subject to his influence. In April 1992, the minister issued an ordinance on 'conditions and methods of teaching religion in public [i.e. state] schools' (*Rozporządzenie* 1992), setting out a number of changes to religious education. The main changes included introducing ethics as an alternative for students not attending RE classes, instituting a system of declarations (to be submitted to head teachers) for parents who did not wish their children to attend RE classes, establishing the rule that RE teachers must be nominated by churches on the government payroll and introducing religious symbols to classrooms. As in the case of the 1991 instruction, the Ombudsman challenged the ministry's decision and protested against the legislation at the Constitutional Tribunal in August 1992 (Dudek 2008). This action caused even more criticism of the Ombudsman's office by the Church and right-wing groups, and involved personal attacks on Tadeusz Zieliński, the new Ombudsman. Zieliński was accused by Primate



Glomp of being a ‘custodian of the old regime’ and ‘not representing the will of the nation’ (Sabbat-Swidlicka 1993:20). The Ombudsman fought back, and accused the Church of turning Poland into a confessional state, an opinion that had also been voiced by many secular and left-wing politicians and intellectuals since 1989 (Zieliński 1993).

In April 1993, the Tribunal issued a new verdict, and partially agreed with the Ombudsman’s concerns, which constituted a defeat for the Church and its allies. Forcing parents to declare that their children would not attend RE classes was deemed unconstitutional. The Tribunal also ruled that students attending RE classes outside school premises (a practice which happened mostly within minority religious communities) should not have their marks recorded in the official end-of-term and end-of-year certificates; the Tribunal also made minor adjustments to the redundancy provisions for RE teachers (*Rzeczpospolita* 1997). The main premise of the RE legislation, i.e. the presence of RE classes in state schools and state support for religious instruction, was maintained.

The main flaws of the legislative process regarding RE in state schools—including a lack of wider consultation, the exclusive position of the Church and the leniency of politicians towards the official PRCC standpoint—were repeated on the occasion of changes in the broadcasting law. Yet again, the government worked closely with the PRCC to develop a crucial piece of legislation that would change the communist legacy, this time setting a foundation for future development of Poland’s media. The Broadcasting Act of December 1992 stated that ‘auditions should respect religious feelings of the audience, particularly (...) the Christian value system’ (Gowin 1995:155). This clause was protested not only by the lay elites but also by some Catholic intellectuals. It reflected widespread concerns about the Church hierarchy’s attempts to influence policy-making beyond the will and interest of church-goers. The Broadcasting Act was also brought to the Constitutional Tribunal, this time by a group of left-wing parliamentarians, but the Tribunal rejected their case in June 1994. Although the Act was denounced as containing ‘legislative defects’, these defects were not deemed relevant to the

constitutional character of the whole act (Gowin 1999:213). This meant that the broadcasting law remained in force in the shape proposed by the government under the PRCC's influence; yet further proof of the Church's successful campaign to realise its interests, and, notably, maintain its grip on key areas of communication and media in order to assure the public visibility of religion.

The PRCC's political gains, and the concessions obtained from the new but weak state authorities between 1989 and 1993, particularly in the field of education, have not only set the tone of policy-making in other areas (see abortion policy-making, below) but positioned the Church firmly in the public square for decades to come. The broadcasting law and religious-education legislation, brought to life with the Church's help between 1991 and 1993, still remain in force (albeit with changes) today. Any attempt at changing the status quo (see Chapter 5) is met with fierce opposition from both the PRCC and its political allies. Moreover, the presence of religious (Catholic) education in schools has allowed the Church to maintain an important degree of social control on all levels, from central to local (Podgórska 2008). Political developments of the 1990s and early 2000s show that the gains made by the Church in particular policy areas were more long-lasting and stable than those of political parties and groups.

### **Abortion and sexuality**

The abortion debate was, and still is, one of the most contentious issues in Polish politics. It must be noted that Poland is not an exception in this, and similar debates take place in other countries around the globe. What is particular to the Polish case, however, is that most of the decisions were taken between 1988 and 1993, and this is also when most relevant arguments in the debate, resounding still today, first surfaced. The period between the first communist initiative, aimed at restricting the PRL's liberal abortion legislation, in late 1988, and the passing

of the new abortion law in January 1993 was marked by extraordinary activity within the Polish Church, including the Episcopate, local clergy and lay organisations and movements.

Another particularity of the Polish abortion debate was the sudden shift in the Church's prioritisation of this issue, which occurred with the regime change. Even though abortion policy was always one of the key parts of the Catholic Church's struggle to defend its social teaching all over the globe, it was not a priority for the PRCC during the communist period. The Polish abortion law of 1956 (amended in 1959) was a model Soviet-style act allowing for unrestricted access to abortion. Despite the law's clearly anti-Catholic character, PRCC did not pay much attention to this act and its consequences before 1988, showing that it was by no means an absolute, timeless priority for the Church (a claim later voiced by the Church hierarchy) (Gowin 1999:151). This shows how flexible the Church was in prioritising key issues and bringing them to the public's attention, despite its claims to being a defender of key moral principles.

In 1988, the ailing communist government attempted to revive the abortion debate in order to redirect the public's attention from the country's economic and social stagnation and to split the opposition camp, which included both leftist, secular and pro-abortionist groups, as well as right-wing groups opposed to abortion. The Church responded to the government's invitation and participated in bilateral talks on a possible revision of the abortion law. The Episcopate put forward a set of proposals, including an absolute ban on abortion and the criminalisation of the act, including criminalising mothers who underwent abortions (Salij 1989). The last communist parliament initiated a debate on the legislative proposal of the Church in May 1989, but the imminent democratic election prevented it from taking a final decision. During a meeting hosted by Primate Glemp on May 5 1989 for Wałęsa, Mazowiecki and other Solidarity leaders, the PRCC leader brought his guests' attention to the importance of abortion policy for the Church.

It was a marked departure from the pre-1989 passive stance of PRCC on abortion. Glemp underlined the belief that 'abortion cannot be an object of political games nor the basis

for judging parliamentary candidates' (Prymas 1989). This statement stands in stark contrast with the PRCC's actions after the June 1989 elections, as abortion became one of the most politicised policy areas, and the Church was actively involved in the policy-making process at all stages. In December 1989, a group of Solidarity senators initiated a revision of the 1956 Abortion Act in line with the PRCC's position on the matter. It is important to note that this time it was not the Church which initiated the process. Gowin (1999:152) makes an interesting observation in relation to the Church's increased interest in abortion in August and September 1990. According to Gowin's analysis of *Pismo Okólne's* output during this period, abortion replaced religious education as a key theme only in autumn 1990, as the Church secured a major victory in the field of education in August of this year (as explained earlier in this chapter) (Gowin 1999:152-155). This confirms that the PRCC was selective in prioritising issues on its agenda in line with the political climate, contrary to the Church's claims to promoting 'absolute values' and waging a continuous struggle to defend unborn children.

The Church's prompt shift from almost complete inactivity to nearly full engagement in the abortion debate demonstrated the instrumental approach that the PRCC took to forwarding its agenda, and revealed its ability to act flexibly in order to maximise its constitutional interests. Having achieved its policy goals regarding religious education, the Church set about pursuing its anti-abortion intentions. The upper house of the parliament started drafting a new law on abortion in 1990, taking the Episcopate's proposal, submitted to the previous parliament, as a starting point. In July, two *Senat* committees adopted a draft abortion bill, largely identical to the PRCC's proposals, with two key changes: women performing abortions were not to be punished, and abortion was allowed if the pregnancy threatened the pregnant woman's life or if it resulted from a crime. The Episcopate's Family Commission protested the *Senat's* draft on both points, and demanded the old pre-election draft be left untouched (*Komisja* 1991:6). By the time the *Senat's* draft was referred to a *Sejm* Extraordinary Committee dealing with the issue, all of the changes proposed by the PRCC had

been taken on board. As the legal battle for the abortion bill accelerated throughout 1990, it impacted greatly on the upcoming presidential election. Both Wałęsa and Mazowiecki, main contenders in the presidential race, reaffirmed their allegiance to the Church and gave full support for its stance on abortion (Jankowska 1991:180-181).

The controversy surrounding the adoption of abortion legislation was accompanied by a wave of popular protests both by the pro-life lobby and opponents of the new legislation, including women's movements and human rights groups. The issue also exacerbated tensions within the opposition parties and post-communists alike. While pro-lifers had the upper hand in parliament and in public debates, the situation among the general population was the opposite. Opinion polls conducted in November 1990 suggested that 60% of Poles opposed the *Senat's* draft (Jankowska 1991:179). The same number of respondents said that a referendum should be organised to decide on the new abortion law (Zubrzycki 1997:45).

The electorate's voice was completely ignored, however, and the lawmakers continued to push for a restrictive abortion law without a referendum. The pro-life lobby in parliament acted under pressure to deliver the new law before John Paul II's next visit to Poland, due in June 1991. The Pope, for his part, reaffirmed his strong views on anti-abortion legislation on numerous occasions, and in January 1991 he referred to the ongoing legislative process, reaffirming his support for the Polish Church and the Episcopate's struggle to pass a restrictive abortion act (Nowicka 1996:24). The Church categorically opposed a referendum, on the grounds that it would constitute a vote on the right to life and a violation of the constitution, although no lawyer or independent institution backed this point of view (PO 1991b). This stood in contrast to Cardinal Glemp's 1989 pledge to keep abortion out of political debates, and the Church's repeated pleas for transparent and democratic policy-making. Eventually, both the pro-life lobby and opponents of the new legislation brought the legislative process to a deadlock, making it impossible for the *Sejm* to pass a law or decide on the referendum. The parliament dissolved in autumn 1991 without deciding on the matter (Gowin 1999:156). This was a clear

example of the Church's disregard for democratic principles, and proof of its instrumental use of contentious political issues for own gain. Even though most Poles supported the idea of a referendum, the Church rejected the very idea that abortion issues could be decided in a popular vote. Additionally, the PRCC preferred for the legislative limbo to last, leaving in place an old communist piece of legislation, instead of trying to reach a compromise with its opponents.

The new parliament elected in October 1993 included more right-wing and conservative MPs than the previous one. All of them were eager to finish the task initiated during the previous term, and enjoyed the strong backing of the Church. At the end of 1991, a group of MPs tabled the same proposal that had been discussed in the previous parliament. In March 1992, the Polish Women's League produced a counter-proposal, but it was swiftly rejected by the *Sejm*. Now that pro-abortionists' voices had been quashed, the pro-life lobby anticipated an easy victory. To the surprise of many, however, the biggest challenge in the 1993 parliament arose from internecine conflict. Some politicians favoured a mild version of the act, allowing for abortions under certain circumstances. A large group of MPs, mostly from the Catholic Electoral Action, favoured a more restrictive ban, along the guidelines prepared by the Episcopate. In the meantime, the Social Committee for a Referendum [on Abortion] started collecting signatures. Meanwhile, the old communist act remained in force, meaning that thousands of abortions were performed every month (Kulczycki 1995:475). Pro-life parliamentarians rushed to negotiate an agreement in order to prevent the referendum and change the communist legislation. The new abortion law, approved by parliament in January 1993, enforced a general ban. Under the new law, abortion would only be deemed legal if: (1) it constituted a threat or a serious health threat to the mother; (2) it was a result of activities undertaken to save the mother's life or prevent serious threat to her health; (3) pre-natal examination suggested that the foetus might be seriously and irreversibly damaged; and/or (4) it was a result of a crime (Gowin 1999:158).

One of the most important features of the public debate that followed the introduction of the new law was the attempt by its supporters to publicise it as a 'compromise'. The document

was indeed a compromise solution between those right-wing groups that favoured a softer approach to abortion and the hardliners. In the ensuing discussions, the Church and pro-life groups often presented it as a compromise between the supporters and opponents of abortion, although the former group was not represented in the law-making process (Chudy 1993). This contentious issue—of compromise—would be of particular importance in future abortion debates: any attempts at revising the law would be criticised as attempts to destroy this purported ‘compromise’ (see Chapter 5). Despite the triumphalism of certain parliamentarians, however, the Church refrained from expressing its satisfaction with the new law. Glemp said merely that it was ‘a step in the right direction’ (Kulczycki 1995:485), while insisting that it did not satisfy the Church’s demands.

The abortion debate that took place between 1988 and 1993 was shaped largely by religious arguments, and in the context of the dictates of the Church and its allies. But its true essence was a political struggle that struck at the heart of democratic principles. Voices of dissent were marginalised, and both sides in the debate used radical arguments to present their cases. Not only did the Church show its disregard for democratic policy-making, but also repeatedly confirmed that it did not support a religiously neutral state. The Church-controlled debate eventually had to come to an end with the 1993 parliamentary elections, won by the post-communists and the agrarian party (PSL), both presenting an alternative view on the abortion issue. This will be further examined in Chapter 5.

## **The Concordat**

A Concordat is an international treaty between the Holy See and the state, regulating relations between the Church and state and society. Although a Concordat lies within the international public-law domain, its unique character comes from the fact that it does not bind countries (e.g.

Poland and the Vatican State), but a country and a religious body (the Holy See) that is a universally recognised international organisation. Moreover, even though Concordats are concluded between the Holy See (an international body) and state authorities, they only refer to citizens of the signatory state on its territory (in this case, Poland), and with reference to the Catholic Church. The history of Concordats goes back to the Middle Ages, and the relations between popes and secular rulers in Europe. According to Wisłocki (1993), the history of Concordats shows that they are an expression of the political will of the Church and state authorities, and a reflection of state interests in internal and external policy. Wisłocki further notes that Concordats are usually signed thanks to the state's will to co-operate with the Holy See, as the latter is generally eager to engage in the process of political discussion, but has no means of initiating it on its own.

Poland's Concordat history started in the inter-war period (see Chapter 3), when the 1921 constitution obliged the Polish government to seek regulation of church-state relations based on a treaty with the Holy See. A few months after the constitution entered into force, the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Education started developing the document, and in 1924 the Council of Ministers sent it to the Vatican for comments. After a brief consultation process, the document was signed in February 1925 and entered into force the same year. The most contentious part of the document pertained to financial arrangements between Church and state (including payment of civil service salaries to priests) and the reclamation of Church property confiscated during the partitions. Other Concordat clauses have since been accepted without much controversy.

The validity of the 1925 Concordat in the post-war period was questioned by the new communist authorities, claiming that the Holy See effectively cancelled it by violating parts of the agreement (referring to the authority of the Polish Roman Catholic Church over the territories of the Second Republic occupied by Nazi Germany). During the communist period, numerous governments tried to normalise the relationship with the Holy See, without much



success (as we saw in Chapter 3). The first initiative leading up to an agreement between the government and the Holy See emerged in 1983, during a meeting of the Joint Commission of the Government and Episcopate. Representatives of the PRCC proposed that a treaty be concluded with the following two key points: affirmation of the permanent character of the socialist state, and assertion of the PRCC's respect for the constitution and national interest. Over the next five years, the Commission produced a 23-point document describing Church-state relations, including the PRCC's respect for the state's secular character and the freedom and autonomy of religious activity for the Church. The Convention was signed by both sides in May 1988 and sent to the Vatican for consultation (Wisłocki 1993:23-24). Soon afterwards, the PRL's government negotiated two documents with the PRCC: the Act on State Relations with the Catholic Church and the aforementioned Convention. Rapid changes in the political and international sphere made the Church reluctant to sign the Convention in its then-current form. The Act on State Relations was passed by the last communist parliament in April 1989 (as we saw in Chapter 3), and the Convention was shelved. In future discussions, the PRCC refused to refer to the 1988 Convention, and declared it invalid in view of the regime change. It must be noted that the Act on State Relations, although passed by a communist parliament, was not questioned by the Church. Janik (2010) argued that the Church's later refusal to draw from the Convention constituted a breach of the *pacta sunt servanda* rule, as the Episcopate had signed the document in 1988. The declaration of the Convention's virtual non-existence by the Church is even more important in view of later developments leading up to the signing of the 1993 Concordat, as we shall see.

After the June 1989 elections, relations between Poland and the Holy See rapidly improved. In July 1989 Poland re-established diplomatic relations, and in September John Paul II nominated Archbishop Józef Kowalczyk (a Polish cleric) as the papal nuncio in Poland. In October 1991, the nuncio presented the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs with a draft of the Concordat (Skorowski 2009:54). Kowalczyk contended that the new document would lead to a

‘reopening’ of the state-Vatican talks. As Janik (2010) points out, this was a half-truth—the talks started from scratch, with no link to the 1983-1988 talks. The new Vatican draft made no reference to the 1988 document. The government agreed to call a joint Church-state commission to negotiate the draft and prepare it for signing and ratification. The commission was composed of six government officials (including the Minister of Foreign Affairs) and six representatives of the Church, including the nuncio and five Polish bishops (Wisłocki 1993:99-100). The negotiation process was very brief, and after two months the document was passed on to the Council of Ministers. The agreed document comprised a short preamble and twenty-nine articles. The preamble briefly introduces the aims and rationale behind the Concordat, including its legal framework and related documents (such as Polish constitutional law) and other legal acts and documents of Vatican II, as well as canon law (Concordat 1998).

The articles can be divided into five main chapters. The first focuses on institutional relations and the autonomy of Church and state. The second pertains to the Church’s legal status. This is of particular importance, as during the communist period the PRCC was the only church without a legal status, and the Episcopate was very keen on regulating this matter (despite the Act on State Relations passed in 1989). The third refers to the freedoms of the Church in relation to the state, including the creation of new organisations and bodies, the appointing Church officials, autonomy in performing its functions, freedom of religion and guarantee of religious holidays. The fourth concerns areas of co-operation between the state and the Church for the benefit of society, including marriage and family matters, religious education, chaplaincy in state institutions (such as the army), religious broadcasting, the charitable activities of the Church and the construction and cultural rights of the PRCC. The final chapter pertains mostly to procedures and details of the implementation of the Concordat (Krakowski 1993:28-35).

The document was adopted by the Council of Ministers on June 1 1993, and then signed by the Krzysztof Skubiszewski, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Nuncio Kowalczyk on July

28 1993 (Anusz 1994:261). But this was not the last step in the legislation process, as the document then needed to be discussed by both parliamentary chambers and duly ratified by both sides (see Chapter 5), but in many ways Skubiszewski's and Kowalczyk's signatures symbolically 'sealed the deal' between both parties and concluded the heated debate on the Concordat that had been ongoing since 1991. It was a very relevant debate, demonstrating the PRCC's strategy of monopolisation in the public domain, as well as revealing the close and sometimes secretive relationship between religion and politics which typified the first years of democratic transformation.

One of the first and most pertinent critiques, both of the Concordat process and then the document itself, came from minority religions and churches. The Polish Ecumenical Council ('Polska Rada Ekumeniczna', PRE), representing Protestant and minority churches, had often voiced its reservations towards the Concordat talks. The basis of the critique was threefold. First of all, minority religions felt side-lined and neglected in the post-1989 period, both in terms of government discourse and policy, and they saw the Concordat as another attempt at legalising the PRCC's monopoly through recourse to religious authority and national Polish-Catholic identity. Second, some members of the PRE remarked that in the modern liberal democracy that Poland's government claimed to be, exclusive contracts with certain religious denominations, no matter how dominant, were no longer necessary. Last but not least, the PRE criticised the Concordat document itself, and the consequences of its immediate implementation. The PRE noted that the document did not contain a clause on equality for all religious denominations, although a similar clause could be found in Italy's Concordat of 1984. Minority denominations were also concerned with the financial aspects of the law, which provided the PRCC with an advantage over other churches in terms of state funding (Szarek 1993:233-237).

Another wave of criticism came from liberal and left-wing parties, as well as civil society organisations, constitutional lawyers and others opposed to the Concordat—both in general and

in this particular form. The most important point of criticism referred to Suchocka's government's competence to handle the issue. The government had no political legitimacy after May 29 1993, when the parliament gave it a no-confidence vote (Gowin 1999:251), yet the government adopted and subsequently signed a document of great legal and constitutional significance. This showed how confident the Church and its allies felt in pursuing their agenda. Even though public opinion was unequivocal in its support for the document, and the government had no political base, the decision that the PRCC saw as essential (signing the Concordat despite lack of political legitimacy) was pushed through.

Those critical of the government accused it of unnecessary haste and secrecy in adopting the document—no wide consultation was employed during the process, and the new Concordat made no reference to the 1988 Convention. Moreover, those concerned with the deepening bond between the state and the PRCC pointed to the fact that the document originated from the Vatican, and was then discussed by a commission including government ministers and six Polish bishops (although one was acting as the papal nuncio), which created the impression of a secretive deal being made between the Polish government and the Polish Church, with little regard for the international dimension of the document (Korboński 2000:136). A number of critical voices focused not so much on the overall framework of the Concordat and the circumstances of its coming to life, but on the particular clauses it contained. Besides the financial aspects of the document, including state financing for two Catholic universities, and the possibility of establishing state-funded Catholic chaplaincies in public institutions—matters already raised by the PRE—there were a number of non-financial points under criticism. The institution of 'Concordat marriages' that existed outside of the state's official register raised concerns about possible bigamy cases, as it allowed for two marriage-registration systems to exist in parallel. Allowing for (Catholic) religious education produced criticism from the proponents of secular education and concern at the PRCC's increased presence in educational establishments. The arguments rehearsed during the implementation of the new education laws

were repeated in this debate, but yet again the PRCC and its political allies had the upper hand. Concordat education clauses reconfirmed the state's full support for Catholic religious education as an essential part of the state education system.

All in all, the Concordat process, however important for Poland's Catholics, constituted another instance of the PRCC's monopolisation of public life and its failure to engage other parties in a constructive debate. Minority religions felt further side-lined, secular parts of the public sphere threatened, and even the Catholic community felt excluded from the process. Gowin (1995:176) claims that the Church 'once again ignored the need to inform and convince the public of the rightness of its initiative', thus contributing to growing tensions between the Church and public opinion.

### **Property Commission**

Besides exerting its influence on national politics and key policy areas such as education, broadcasting and sexuality, the PRCC was keen to secure its financial position in the newly democratic reality. By 1989, the communist government had already started talking to the PRCC about the restitution of Church property confiscated during the Stalinist years. The estimates of the PRCC's property losses in the early years of communist rule vary from 85,000-170,000 hectares (Szulc 2006). The communist authorities in their dying years tried to win the Church's support for moderate reforms within the system, and therefore offered it a chance to reclaim some of its lost property. In 1989, the authorities established a Property Commission that was supposed to make decisions regarding the return of state and local government property to the PRCC. The Commission comprised six representatives of the government and six representatives of the Church (Łazarewicz 2009b); working in three teams of four, the Commission was meant to review applications from Church institutions (parish churches,

monasteries, regional bishoprics and the Episcopate, amongst others) and return confiscated property.

Due to the rapid changes in the political environment that ensued, the Commission only started operating in 1991. It was founded by the president of the Office of the Council of Ministers, Jan Ambroziak, a former employee of the PRCC's Episcopate (Agnosiewicz 2002). Ambroziak urged the Commission's members to issue decisions promptly if the Church presented compelling evidence in support of its case (Łazarewicz 2009a). The Commission's regulatory procedure, prepared by Ambroziak, was a vivid example of the imbalance of power in Polish politics between the state and the Church in the early years of transformation. First of all, members of the Commission, although partially nominated by the government, did not have to act on its instruction, and were not held accountable for their actions. The application procedure was secret, and interested parties were not informed about the ongoing process of reclaiming property. This included the current owners of the property in question. Moreover, the Commission's decision was final, and no appeal procedure was devised. Valuation of the claimed property was to be provided by the PRCC alone, and no independent valuation was required for the Commission to return property (*Regulatory Procedure* 2002). The Commission initially accepted applications, until 1992, and over 3000 were filed by that date. Originally, the Commission was supposed to decide on applications within six months, but it remained operational until 2011. By 2009, over 2500 applications had been decided, and over 60,000 hectares of Church property had been returned. Much of this land now belonged to local authorities, private companies and public institutions, including hospitals and universities, and the reinstatement of land caused a public backlash against the Church's actions, including numerous protests and lawsuits (Wiśniewska 2009). The Commission had been the cause of a major political scandal in 2011, when it was discovered that the Church's claims had not been independently verified (i.e. the PRCC itself assessed how much it wanted back and what the value was of equivalent real estate offered), and that PRCC institutions had used the recovered

property for profit-making activities (Łoziński 2011). By the time it was dissolved, the Commission had contributed to significant strengthening of the Church's real-estate portfolio, and had increased its material wealth. The state anti-corruption agency launched an investigation into the Commission's operations in 2011; as of 2013 the investigation is ongoing, and the first guilty verdict against a surveyor appointed by PRCC was handed out in 2012 (Pietraszewski 2012; Skowronek 2013).

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have outlined the relationship between religion and politics in the first years of Polish transformation after the 1989 democratic elections. The first four years of democratic government were marked by rapid reforms and rising tensions in the political, economic, cultural and religious realms. The main institutions of the old regime—the communist government and the communist party—had long-since collapsed. With Solidarity's coming to power, important divisions started to arise within the movement. New political groups and parties were created. The Church remained the only major social institution relatively unaffected by the regime change. It had to respond, however, to a much bigger challenge: functioning in a new democratic reality, a surprising scenario for even the most outspoken opponent of the communist regime. Newly democratic Poland set about becoming a Western liberal democracy, and this brought about tension within and between social groups and institutions. Those favoured by the communists, such as state trades unions, farmers and industry workers, lost out in the new system. Those that had been subjugated by the old regime, including Solidarity and the Church, could now enjoy new opportunities.

The Church entered the democratic public arena with confidence and a great authority inherited from the past era. The communist praetorianism legacy made the Church the only

mediating authority in society, accepted by both the failing communist government and the emerging opposition. Once both of the great powers of pre-1989 Poland started dividing, arguing and standing against each other in democratic elections, the Church remained the last instance of stability. This gave the PRCC tremendous leverage and influence on political processes. The former opposition politicians were very quick to reaffirm their allegiance to the Church, and praised it for supporting Solidarity during the communist times, giving the PRCC much more credit than it actually deserved for the sake of their own political gain, as the Church became an important political actor. Part of the praetorian legacy was also the overall institutional chaos and lack of structured dialogue between government institutions, political parties and social organisations during the first transition period. This put the Church in the driving seat again, making it an indispensable part of the country's political landscape. Similarly to the events of late 1980s, the Church reaffirmed its role not only as a symbolic praetorian institution (this time providing continuity and stability in times of rapid transformation), but also engaged in institutional praetorianism, actively participating in policy-making and facilitating communication between state and political institutions.

It must be noted that the PRCC's new role was not only due to the politicians' eagerness to involve it in politics, or the exceptional circumstances of transition. As the Church leadership had already engaged in political activity during the 1980s, the first democratic elections merely intensified this process of religious republicisation. Although the country's rulers and society vowed to transform Poland into a Western liberal democracy and build a civil society, the Church's vision was not entirely compatible with these concepts. The account of the Church's involvement in the first elections between 1989 and 1993 proves that political neutrality was not on the PRCC's agenda during these years. Cases of active campaigning by priests, and the regular use of Church premises for political purposes were common. Not only did the Polish Church get involved in elections, but it also made sure its policies were embraced by the government. Advocating restrictive abortion legislation and broadcasting laws and rushing religious



education into schools are just a few examples of how efficient and persistent the Church was in pursuing its interests. The PRCC showed that although it agreed with basic tenets of a democratic state, it wanted it to be based on Christian values and the social teachings of the Catholic Church as the dominant faith.

The most controversial elements of the Church's political activity, however, were not the policies themselves (although they were contested by many), but the ways in which they were introduced. The Church, in co-operation with the authorities, completely bypassed most consultation processes and marginalised other social institutions, including minority religious groups. While Primate Glemp was a regular guest in government and parliament offices, only two out of seven Polish prime ministers met with representatives of minority religions between 1989 and 1993 (Szarek 1993:233). Issues such as religious education or abortion law were decided almost exclusively in co-operation between the PRCC and government. This further confirmed the Church's unwelcoming attitude towards democratic bargaining principles, a component of liberal democracies. Even if the PRCC sometimes presented itself as a civil society organisation, it did so only to show that 'it knew better what civil society's needs are', and was there to help achieve them (Borowik 2008).

The PRCC strived to maximise its institutional strength by securing a privileged status—not just through good relations with politicians—and by pursuing its policy plans. The Church's exceptional status in society was confirmed by the Concordat, making Catholicism *primus inter pares* in Poland's religious landscape. The creation of the Property Commission, and the subsequent return of vast amounts of land and real estate—including the confiscation of public property such as hospitals and universities—has shown that the Church's plans are based on maximising its power at the expense of the public and the state, and even with disregard of the law.

All of the above processes have become of great significance for the future of nascent Polish democracy. The Church's continuous involvement in politics, and the politicians'

eagerness to embrace the PRCC's political activity, have hugely influenced the development (or lack thereof) of Poland's civil society. The PRCC came close to becoming a monopolist in many important government consultations on policy issues; indeed, many religious minorities have been effectively marginalised. This has also had a long-lasting impact on Poland's secularisation. Certain processes that may otherwise have taken place were virtually 'frozen' by the PRCC's rapid and total seizure of public life, including enforcing religious education, insisting on Catholic-friendly broadcasting and applying a restrictive abortion law on a society that would otherwise be reluctant to embrace those policies.

Besides—or perhaps because of—public controversy, the PRCC's contentious policies have caused it to lose a lot of its pre-1989 popularity. Just before communism collapsed, over 90% of Poles had confidence in the Church, making it the most trustworthy institution in the country. This number quickly came down to under 50% in November 1992 (Daniel 1995:412). Whereas in 1991 only 53% of Poles thought the Church meddled too much with politics, in 1994 this number had already reached 70% (Kościół 2002).

However, since late 1993, a significant change in the Church's involvement in politics and the politicians' stance towards religion can be noted. The gradual normalisation of the reform processes, and the stabilisation of Poland's political institutions, have transformed the relationship between Church and state, and caused the two spheres to become more separate. The return of the post-communists to power in 1993 also contributed to the government adopting a more reserved position towards religion. Most of the mechanisms developed in the first four years of transition, however, as well as key policies decided then, remained in place, and influenced the political and social landscape of the country for years to come. The patterns of this influence will be analysed in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 5: Sustained Republicisation: 1993-2007

The previous chapter dealt with the first years of Polish transformation (1989-1993) and the place of religion and the Church in politics and public life. There, I showed that the legacy of the 1980s and the strong position of the Church, combined with the sympathy of political figures to the Church's concerns and the prioritisation of the institutional interests of the PRCC and political parties, combined with rapid transformation in Polish politics, led to the re-emergence of religion in public life. In the chapter I looked at the key issues influencing the relationship between politics and religion in post-1989 Poland, including birth control, education, broadcasting and Church finances.

This chapter will continue the analysis of the relationship between religion, politics, the Church and public life in Poland beyond the initial transformation period, covering the years 1993-2007. The reason for choosing 1993 as a break point was addressed in the previous chapter—this was the year of the relative normalisation of church-state relations, including the signing of the Concordat and the return of the post-communists to power. The terminal date—2007—marked the time when the right-wing, pro-Catholic coalition of Law and Justice, Self-Defence and the League of Polish Families collapsed.

The aim of the chapter is two-fold. First of all, I set out to show how the relationship between religion and politics developed over the course of the first two decades of Polish democracy. For the sake of consistency, a number of areas that I examined in Chapter 4 will also be addressed, such as abortion, religious education and broadcasting, amongst other issues. This links in with the second aim of the chapter, which is to illustrate how the early transformation years (1989-1993) influenced the course of later events and sustained religious republicisation in Poland. I will argue that the mechanisms and policies developed in this immediate post-communist transformation period were largely preserved over the next few years, despite continuous changes in the country's political, social and economic life. The

preservation of the status quo in the areas strategic to the Church and its allies is a testimony to continuous strength of religion in Polish public life and the lobbying power of the PRCC. The lack of any significant changes in policy areas deemed a priority by the Church and religious circles also confirms that the first years of transformation were essential for further political developments in the country, as the policies agreed upon then last for over two decades now. Last but not least, I will demonstrate the non-linear character of the secularisation of Polish public life. This will be done in order to relate the chapter's content to the theories of secularisation presented in Chapter 1. The material presented will illustrate how the close relationship between religion and politics in post-1989 Poland diverted the course of certain secularisation processes, or prevented them from taking place entirely. Using Moyser's five-step model of political secularisation, I will show how a right-wing government managed to reverse many secularisation trends over a short period of time, despite reluctant public opinion and opposition from left-wing parties. The PRCC's role in the process was central—particularly given the fact that the Church capitalised on its quick gains during the 1989-1993 period and strongly defended the status quo in key policy areas, while additionally trying to increase its presence and importance in other areas.

## **Abortion and sexuality**

As the previous chapter has illustrated, abortion and sexuality issues remained very high on the agenda in Polish politics in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As we saw, the January 1993 legislation, even though it embraced most of the PRCC's concerns regarding abortion, did not conclude the debate. The Church was not satisfied, as the act allowed abortion under certain circumstances. A prominent Catholic weekly urged the community 'not to call a disaster a compromise' (Chudy 1993). In fact, the Church pushed for even more restrictive measures to

be put in place, despite the fact that 60% of Poles disagreed with the Catholic stance on this issue and just over 30% supported it (Bijak 1996).

The immediate effects of the new abortion law included a sharp fall in the number of legal abortions performed in Poland, obviously, but also the fast development of an abortion underground and 'abortion tourism' (Nowicka 1996). Church officials did not openly acknowledge this, choosing to celebrate the decrease of legal abortions as obvious proof of the new law's positive effect on society. The initial dissatisfaction with the new law that the PRCC expressed in the first months after it was passed was replaced by a more moderate stance for this very reason, along with the fact that the pro-choice lobby and other opponents of the restrictive legislation started to voice their reservations so loudly (Gowin 1999:160).

However, the September 1993 elections brought about the defeat of the right-wing and Catholic parties and coalitions and resulted in the return of the post-communist parties to power. The Democratic Left Alliance, which gained the largest number of votes, was openly anti-clerical, and vowed to revise the January 1993 Abortion Act. The minority coalition partner, the Polish Peasant Party, was more hesitant on this issue, as its ideology mixed elements of traditional moral conservatism with a left-wing take on the state and economy. This disagreement within the coalition slowed down work on the new legislation. The upcoming local elections forced the SLD to appease its leftist electorate, but the tensions between the SLD and the PSL meant that the Parliamentary Women's Group ('Parlamentarna Grupa Kobiet', PGK) took the initiative. In June 1994, the lower house of parliament passed amendments to the abortion law (Millard 1999:134). The main amendment concerned the possibility of terminating pregnancy due to 'social reasons'—particularly the difficult social situation of pregnant women. It also allowed for abortions to be performed legally outside the state health-care system. Before coming into force, the bill had to be approved by the president, but Wałęsa was a declared anti-abortionist and had no intention of signing the document. When justifying his veto, the former Solidarity leader said that 'no economic reasons can legalise an assault on human life. (...) As the

president of Poland, defined in the constitution as a state ruled by law, with a millennium-old Christian tradition, I cannot sign such a document' (Wałęsa, in Gowin 1999:161). Wałęsa's refusal combined elements of personal conviction with a respect for Christian tradition as a justification for certain legal provisions. The statement illustrated a common phenomenon in contemporary Polish politics, as we have seen, drawing moral conviction from a vague notion of the 'Christian legacy' of the country. Statements of this type were usually concomitant with the PRCC's current stance and testify to the continued political power of the Church.

Wałęsa's veto meant that the amendments returned to parliament. After fierce criticism from the Episcopate, the PSL decided to change its position and did not support the amendments in the second vote. This, combined with the right-wing opposition's support for the presidential veto, meant that parliament failed to override it. The old anti-abortion measures remained in place until the election as president of Aleksander Kwaśniewski, a young ex-communist politician promising change and future-oriented politics. But political differences between the SLD and the PSL again did not allow the ex-communists to take the initiative on abortion. It was the SLD's minor ally, the Labour Union that took up the amendments where Wałęsa's veto had left them. An Extraordinary Parliamentary Commission debated the amendments in early 1996, and after three months' discussion tabled a bill incorporating three major changes: legalising abortion for women in 'difficult life circumstances', introducing sex education in schools and encouraging the wide use of contraceptives. Significantly, the proposed bill reinstated neutral terminology: 'pregnant woman' and 'foetus' replaced 'mother of a conceived child' and 'conceived child', respectively (Nowicka 1996:24). In August 1996 the *Sejm*, dominated by the left-wing parties, passed the proposed amendments.

The Church's reaction was immediate and very strong. Bishop Pieronek of Cracow, the Secretary of the Episcopate, called it a 'crime against humanity', and Bishop Ryczan of Kielce called the parliamentarians 'unworthy', claiming that it would have been better for Poland had the pregnant women's mothers performed abortions on them (*New Law* 1996). The Pope

himself decided to speak out against the law. In a letter, the Supreme Pontiff fulminated that ‘a nation which kills its own children is a nation without a future’, and that the Polish Church ‘has gone into mourning because of the criminal law’ passed by the parliament (Noszczyk 1996). Church officials and Catholic activists actively rallied against the legislation. Opposition to supporters of the law was very often radical (see Pieronek and Ryczan’s statements above), and all political parties and organisations showing signs of support for the amendments were criticised in the strongest terms. In a general atmosphere of accusation, hostility and polarisation of positions, with particular extremism on the part of anti-abortion campaigners within and around the Church, public opinion was yet again neglected. Between 1994 and 1999 the support for a total ban on abortion, favoured by the PRCC, had dropped from 14% to 10%. Half of the respondents in a 1996 poll contended that abortion should be allowed for social reasons, in total opposition to the Church’s teachings (Zielińska 2000:40).

This process confirmed two important tendencies within the Church. The first one was that the Church continued to purport to act as a representative of the nation vis-à-vis the state (e.g. by putting forward its own legislative proposals), a position adopted during the 19<sup>th</sup>-century partitions and the communist period, and largely maintained in the post-1989 order. The second tendency was that the PRCC saw itself outside of the democratic state structures—it frequently acted with disregard for democratic mechanisms, and argued for certain policy issues such as abortion and sexuality to be exempt from democratic bargaining and subject only to the social doctrine of the Catholic Church.

President Kwaśniewski decided to support the new act, however, and in November 1996 the liberalised abortion law was signed. It remained in force until 1998, and contributed to a further deterioration of church-state relations and the greater polarisation of the abortion debate. It also caused the number of legally performed abortions to increase for the first time since 1981. Up until the new law, in post-1989 Poland the number of legal abortions had dropped regularly year by year. In 1989, over 80,000 legal abortions were registered, but by 1996

this number had dropped to 521. The new legislation pushed the numbers up again, to 3,189 in 1994 (Johnston 2000). At the same time, underground abortions were estimated to be around 200,000 terminations per annum (Czerwinski 2003:658).

The new, liberal law was not in place for long. In December 1996 a group of right-wing senators took the abortion bill to the Constitutional Tribunal, arguing that it was unconstitutional on a number of points. According to the petitioners, the new act infringed the right to life from conception, stripped the 'conceived child' of its legal status and prioritised the interests of the mother and her social situation over the child's right to life. All of these arguments had, of course, been set out by Church officials, and so the case was mostly built around arguments used regularly by the Church in the abortion debate. The senators confirmed their allegiance to the Church when they included sexual education on their list of reservations to the new law, claiming that it was unconstitutional as well. Although sexual education was not related to abortion legislation, it was an important point on the PRCC's agenda (Gowin 1999:163).

The tensions surrounding the abortion debate, and the upcoming constitutional referendum and parliamentary elections, caused the Tribunal to act promptly. The state prosecutor, when presenting his statement in front of the Tribunal, argued in favour of the bill. He claimed that protecting 'conceived children' from conception would require comprehensive changes in the law, including total penalisation of abortion. According to the prosecutor, the new legislation was an improvement on the 1993 Act and should remain in force. To the surprise of many, the Constitutional Tribunal ruled against parliament and state prosecution in late May 1997, declaring the new act unconstitutional on five out of eight points raised by the senators (Eberts 1998:826). The ruling caused a major controversy among the elites and in wider society. There was no agreement even within the Tribunal itself: three judges filed dissenting opinions, stating that the Tribunal had exceeded its powers and had become involved in a political argument. It must be noted that the three dissenting judges were nominated by the SLD, and



their ruling on the abortion case was largely consistent with their party's programme. And the person with the most decisive power in the Tribunal was its chair, Andrzej Zoll, who was nominated by a right-wing party (Siedlecka 2006). Other criticisms of the Tribunal's ruling, coming from the country's most prominent lawyers, included misinterpretation of the new constitution (see below for details of the constitutional debate) that had been adopted only two months earlier (*Trybunał* 1997:142-160).

The Church welcomed the Tribunal's ruling, and called for all sides of the conflict to respect the 'compromise' incorporated in the 1993 law. Bishop Pieronek said that he 'felt safer in Poland' after the Tribunal's decision (Pieronek, in Eberts 1998:826). The PRCC's confidence in the Tribunal's ruling was strengthened by the victory of a right-wing coalition party, Solidarity Electoral Action ('Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność', AWS), in the September 1997 parliamentary elections. The AWS was created in an attempt to revive the Solidarity ethos in Polish politics, and bring together parties remaining from the anti-communist opposition. The coalition's coming to power was of crucial importance to the Church and its policy ideas in the public sphere. The SLD-PLS government had been the first and only post-1989 government to have decided to cut visible ties with the Church, and not to pursue the PRCC's agenda in key areas such as abortion, sexuality and education (see below). The AWS's administration represented a major change in this respect. According to Wenzel (1998:145), 'The key to understanding the program of the AWS is to treat it as a value-based grouping. All participants define themselves as following the Christian ideology, as interpreted by the Catholic Church'. Solidarity's draft constitution, one of the key documents to which the AWS referred, declared that 'human life is protected from conception to natural death' (a direct expression of the Church's position on the issue) and announced the coalition's strategy once in power (Konstytucja 1994). In December 1997, the Solidarity-dominated lower house of parliament confirmed the Tribunal's ruling, therefore reinstating the 1993 law (Eberts 1998:826).

The dramatic circumstances surrounding the rewriting of the 1993 abortion law in 1994-1997, accompanied by an intense and heated public debate, led to the polarisation of opinions within the political establishment. It must be noted that throughout, public opinion remained unchanged. Zielińska (2000:41) argues that, paradoxically, the fact that 58% of Poles accepted the 1996 amendments and only 33% opposed them was due to the anti-abortion campaigning by the Church and political parties. Zielińska further suggests that the abundance of anti-abortion rhetoric expounded by PRCC officials and politicians produced the opposite to the desired effect, fostering an increasing dissatisfaction with the state and the Church's intrusion into private life. It is important to note that even at this stage neither the right-wing politicians nor the PRCC decided to consider the public opinion's reservations and continuously campaigned for a tough abortion law.

Nevertheless, another important consequence of the 1996-1997 debacle was that following the 1997 elections no other government decided to challenge the status quo on abortion. The SLD's failed attempts at doing so, the strong reaction of the Church and its allies, and the defeat of the SLD and the PSL in subsequent elections in 1997 all demonstrated the potential of the Church to exercise its influence on national politics. Even though the post-communists returned to power again in 2001, they still<sup>11</sup> have not attempted to re-address the abortion policy. Tentative attempts at reviving the abortion debate and liberalising the existing law made in the late 1990s and early 2000s have quickly been silenced by the Church's calls to respect 'compromise' (Treder 1999; Kompromis 2007; see also page 25). And yet, efforts made by the PiS-LPR coalition government to make the abortion law more restrictive (see further on in this chapter) resulted in the mobilisation of pro-choice liberal and left-wing groups determined to protect the current legislation, fearing that new proposals would lead to a complete ban on abortion (Bratkowska and Graff 2007).

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<sup>11</sup> As of 2012.

This uneasy status quo holds, and is a vivid example of the Church's continued bargaining power. Even though it is frequently referred to as a 'compromise', the law largely reflects the Church's position, and makes Poland one of the most restrictive abortion regimes in Europe, together with Malta and Ireland. The anti-abortion lobby and the majority of Poles that do not support restrictive abortion legislation remain silent to avoid upsetting the Church (fearing that it could, in return, campaign for a stricter law), and because of the dominant political climate that impedes any major legal changes that would contradict the Church's policy, regardless of the political orientation of the government.

## **Education**

Although the main controversy concerning the presence and form of religious instruction in public schools only developed in the early 1990s, and was somehow muted by the Constitutional Tribunal's 1993 ruling on the legality of religious education, the issue still occupies a central place in Polish politics and church-state relations. A number of key debates within the Church and on religious issues in the public sphere were closely linked to the place of religion in education, and of education in religion. The 1993 Concordat debate, the creation of the 1997 Constitution and the sexuality debate all contained references to both.

In Chapter 4 we saw that the signing of the Concordat in 1993 was grounds for the first controversy in the field of education after the Tribunal's ruling. Article 12 of the document declared that public schools and kindergartens should provide space for RE education within their programmes. It also specified that RE teachers (catechists) were only subject to Church, not state laws and regulations in terms of teaching methods, curriculum content and employment. These provisions were challenged by centre and left-wing activists and lawyers—to no effect (Pietrzak 1994). In 1997, the leftist SLD government tried to formally ban the inclusion

of RE grades on end-of-term and end-of-year school certificates, but the initiative was blocked by the parliament's upper chamber, where the right-wing parties had a majority (Gowin 1999:202). Ratification of the Concordat in 1998 confirmed RE's place in the educational system. The new AWS government's stance had once again proved that right-wing parties were eager to implement the Church's agenda, even in the absence of direct pressure from the PRCC. Immediately after coming to power in 1998, the post-Solidarity party tabled a project dividing public schools into secular and Christian. The project, sponsored by the Ministry of Education, was criticised in both Church and secular circles, and was eventually dropped (Gowin 1999:202). The subsequent left-wing government, in power between 2001 and 2005, did not challenge the status quo regarding RE in state education, despite its pre-election pledges. Major changes in favour of the Church's demands, and sometimes even exceeding them, came during the PiS-LPR coalition after the 2005 elections (see below for details of the 2005-2007 government's activities).

In the meantime, the debate on religion and education continued, despite the absence of major changes in the general framework. The debate developed in many directions. The first and most important strand pertained to church-state relations and the place of religion within society in general, and the educational system in particular. The second concerned the influence of the Church—as the most important provider of RE in schools—on key educational issues. The third, held mostly within Catholic circles but also resounding within secular organisations, referred to the role of Catholic catechisation in the upbringing of young Catholics, and the implications of an official RE programme in schools for the Catholic Church and Catholics in general.

The first discussion was the most essential and profound in its consequences for the shape of church-state relations and wider relations between religion and society. In Chapter 4, I explained that the prompt introduction of RE in state schools after the fall of communism mobilised both supporters and opponents of this policy, and divided public opinion along new

secular-religious lines, which were largely different from the divisions that had pertained in communist Poland (in pre-1989 Poland, most Poles opposing the government would favour religious education in schools). Opponents of RE in public schools contended that its introduction infringed equality before the law and threatened state neutrality in matters of belief. A lot of them argued that this was not an ideological matter, insisting that proponents of RE in schools would react the same way if an atheist worldview were presented as part of the official curriculum. Their main argument was that the state should not support any worldviews, in order not to prejudice one against another (Janicki 1990; Graczyk 1997). This model of church-state relations was fully in line with the liberal democratic view that modern Poland wanted to draw from, but it was not the only view represented in the public debate.

Supporters of religious education in schools used two kinds of argument. Most of them referred to the country's Christian past and traditions and the role of the PRCC in defending statehood and fighting against foreign oppression—including during the communist period (Dębowski 2008). Another widely supported group of arguments concerned the fact that the majority of Poles were Catholic, and that the state should recognise this fact. A prominent right-wing politician maintained that respecting religious freedom required the state to 'introduce religion into comprehensive education and upbringing programme' (Grześkowiak 1990). Whereas the first strand of the religion-education debate focused on legal and political issues stemming from theories of state and church-state relations, as well as political ideologies, the second strand was much more down-to-earth and practical, as it concerned the Church's influence over education and related issues through the presence of RE classes in state schools.

Opponents of RE argued that allowing the Church to enter state schools would cause direct pressure on pupils and parents—not only in RE, but in all issues that the Church was involved in—and that this would result in discrimination against non-Catholics. Numerous reports from parents, schools, non-governmental organisations and journalists confirmed that this fear was largely justified. With over 90% of primary school pupils attending RE classes, and

a significant proportion of secondary and high school students doing the same, protection of the secular minority had become a major issue in Polish schools (Majcherek 2010). Areas of controversy were numerous. In many schools, particularly in smaller towns and rural areas, the provision of ethics classes for pupils not attending RE classes had met with obstacles and was often fictive. Although the Church has long denied that this is a major problem, and both state and local authorities have downplayed it, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in June 2010 that the lack of choice between RE and ethics constituted a violation of human rights, and urged the Polish government to take appropriate measures to avoid this in the future (Majcherek 2010). Even though, according to opinion polls, 70% of Poles would prefer religious education classes to have a more neutral curriculum, focused on different world religions (Podgórska 2008), the present Polish model is reserved for the Church (and, marginally, other religious denominations) and the teaching of the Catholic catechism. Neither schools nor parents have any influence on the RE curriculum, nor do teachers. This leads to frequent conflicts and tensions between school authorities, parents and their children. Some of the educational materials used during RE classes have caused controversy by presenting an exclusively Catholic view on most issues, and dismissing in a derogatory manner those presenting alternative views (Podgórska 2008).

Given how hermetic this RE model is, the Church exercises considerable power in Polish schools and in education in general. Cases of catechists and local priests intervening on behalf of the Church in secular matters that purportedly contravene Catholic doctrine are frequent (Dębowski 2008). According to a report on RE in schools by Podgórska (2008), the most common interventions have included school parties banned on Fridays (the Catholic day of abstinence), school holidays planned around religious events, and the cancellation of extra-curricular activities deemed inappropriate by the Church (for example RPGs [role-playing games] and fantasy-gaming societies).

Additionally, the local Church authorities exercise pressure on school authorities in matters that they deem important. Official complaints pertaining to catechists and their practices are dealt with very slowly. Schools are punished for their pupils' 'disobedience' towards RE teachers. As described earlier in this chapter, there are a number of key areas, such as abortion and sexuality, in which the Church prioritises its activities. This is also the case in educational establishments. Although sex education is a separate subject from RE, and although issues of sexuality are in no way part of the Church's competences in education, there are frequent reports of Church intervention in these matters in schools (Jarzyński 2009).

Although sexual issues prove most contentious in the debate on church-state relations in education, there are other clashes which exceed the official curriculum. The theory of evolution, officially embraced by the Vatican as not contravening Church doctrine, still proves contentious in Polish schools. And the history curriculum is also challenged by RE teachers, with issues such as the Inquisition and the Crusades being either side-lined or completely omitted from the catechesis (Podgórska 2008).

The third pillar of the education debate concerns the transfer of RE classes from vestries and parishes, where they were held during the communist period, to public schools. The fact that catechesis was to become an ordinary school subject, with grades and attendance lists, was not, rather strikingly, easily accepted by all members of the Church. Even though most religious groups and organisations welcomed the change, there were voices of dissent. Janusz Korwin-Mikke, a controversial right-wing MP, said in his 1992 parliamentary speech that introducing religion into public schools was a conspiracy of secular circles against the Church intended to turn pupils away from religion (Korwin-Mikke 1992). Another Catholic intellectual suggested that placing RE classes in public schools destroyed the bond of young Catholics with their parishes, and made religion just another subject to be studied for a couple of years and then forgotten (Obremski 1993). A number of RE teachers (priests and laymen) also suggested that holding RE classes on school premises would deter pupils and be detrimental to the quality of

teaching (Dębowski 2008). Despite the initial worries and objections, after introducing RE into schools (and the Constitutional Tribunal's 1993 verdict reconfirming the legality of this move), PRCC authorities firmly defended the contentious policy and did whatever it could to support it. Initial fears about the damaging consequences of this policy on the PRCC's image, and on the place of religion in young people's lives, were overshadowed by the institutional interests of the Church and the will to maximise its influence on society. None of the post-1993 governments, either right- or left-wing, challenged the status quo either. A number of Polish sociologists of religion and politicians have pondered upon this issue, as it appears that most political forces in the country are wary of upsetting the Church, as they see it as a powerful political actor, and they do not act for fear of a negative reaction from the PRCC, even if they know that the electorate supports them (Borowik 2008 and 2010; Janicki and Władyka 2009; Burnetko 2008).

The education debate shows that the Church became conscious of a stark choice: an ideologically neutral state or the chance to enjoy the benefits of being the biggest religious organisation; the PRCC clearly preferred the latter. The way that RE education was first introduced into schools and then defended proves that the PRCC had little regard for democratic procedures when pursuing its own agenda. This can be illustrated by a quote from the 1990 pastoral letter of the Episcopate on catechesis in schools, in which the bishops maintained that RE's return to schools was a matter of basic human rights, and therefore 'cannot be based on principles of consent or a political interplay of political forces' (List 1990). The developments of the late 1990s and early 2000s show that the decisions taken in that key period (1989-1993) had great significance for maintaining the status quo for years to come, and that the alliance between the Church and political society was maintained.



## Constitution

The constitutional debate that took place in Poland throughout the 1990s brought together the most important issues concerning religion, politics and church-state relations that had persisted in the public domain after the fall of communism. This was due to the essential character of the debate on basic law, together with the vivid interest of religious organisations, particularly the PRCC, in the matter, as well as the eagerness of political organisations to use religious rhetoric in the debate.

In terms of the PRCC's role in public life, the constitutional debate was particularly important. Even though the Church's actions in public and political life were muted after 1993 (see above in this chapter: Education and abortion), it joined in the debate as one of the most important stakeholders, and remained one of the key figures in constitution-making until 1997, when the document was approved in a referendum. The four most important features of this debate were the mobilising potential of the Catholic Church, the influence of the Church on politics and politicians, the political establishment's eagerness to co-operate with the Church, the role of discourse in public debate and the ability of the Church and its allies to promote their agenda in the public sphere.

The Polish constitutional debate started in the early 1990s. After a regime change and numerous changes in society and the economy, Poland needed a new basic legal framework. The first attempts at reforming basic law during the first democratic term of the Polish parliament after 1989 proved futile, due to large differences in opinion on how the new constitution should be constructed and approved. Since the old communist constitution of 1952 did not provide a good framework for the governance and functioning of the new regime, it was temporarily replaced by the so-called 'Small Constitution', a legal act with basic constitutional provisions, adopted in 1992 (*Ustawa* 1992).

The Church positioned itself in the centre of the constitutional debate in its very early stages. In 1990 the Episcopate published a letter on the 'Position of the Conference of the Episcopate of Poland on the Axiological Premises of the New Constitution' (Stanowisko 1990), even though the decision-making process had not really started. The return to power of the ex-communists in 1993 accelerated developments. Both the SLD and the PSL, stemming as they did from mainstream communist parties, sought a legitimate strategy that would strengthen their position in the new democratic reality. Participating in the drafting of a new constitution in a situation where both parties had a parliamentary majority proved a perfect legitimising strategy. On the other hand, the Church and right-wing parties, acting in agreement, did not welcome the new SLD-PSL initiative for the exact same reason—they feared that the ex-communist majority would try to impose their will and apply their version of the constitution. This meant that, whereas the post-communist parties and their coalition partner, the UP, were inclined to reach a compromise regarding a number of issues, the Church and right-wing parties were very radical in their demands and not inclined to negotiate their position—an indication of strength and confidence in their power.

The first, and probably most important, marker of the significance of religion in public debate was the fact that the Church and its allies, including right-wing political parties and civil society organisations, managed to mainstream the Church's agenda in the constitutional debate and secure a very important place within it. Despite a plethora of stakeholders and views on the most important issues within the constitution, most debates were limited to two main groups, the liberal and left-wing establishment, most often represented by the Freedom Union ('Unia Wolności', UW), the SLD, the PSL and the UP, and the right-wing, conservative and pro-Church circles represented by the Church and smaller right-wing parties later united in the AWS. This division pre-determined the character of most debates and polarised public opinion along secular-religious lines.

The most important strand of the Polish constitutional debate—its preamble—illustrates the above-described phenomenon well. The fact that the most important part of the constitutional debate did not concern institutional arrangements, checks and balances or any other governance issues, so keenly debated in other countries, but rather values, symbols and the definition of the nation, indicated that symbolic politics could still mobilise Poles like they did in the times of the Great Novena (as outlined in Chapter 3).

A preamble is not part of the constitution text as such; it is merely an introduction and a statement of the values and intentions of the law-makers. Most European countries' constitutions have preambles, but those of CEE countries focus on history and political changes in the country; a preamble is not an essential part of the basic law.

The preamble debate focused on a number of issues, but those particularly relevant from the point of view of religion and politics were the definition of nation, the source of state law and the *Invocatio Dei* ('Call on God', a reference to God in a legal text). Although none of these refer to specific legal clauses within the constitution, and have no legally binding power, they became the most hotly contested issues in Polish public opinion since the collapse of communism.

The seemingly irrelevant issue of defining what a nation is in the Polish constitution's preamble developed into a major discussion that lasted four years. The first draft of the constitution prepared by the parliament's Constitutional Commission opened with the words 'We, Polish citizens'. This prompted the conservative and pro-Church politicians to start pondering the importance of the 'nation' (i.e. an ethnic concept) as opposed to 'citizenship' and 'society', which they deemed modern and not historically rooted. This demonstrated the Church's readiness to 'historicise' the constitutional debate, which proved useful with regards to other issues that the Church wanted to put forward (see below), and created a legitimisation strategy for the Church's continuous involvement. The Church's official reaction to the first draft and the citizenship issue was summarised by Archbishop Józef Michalik of Przemyśl:

If the great majority of citizens have a clear Polish national consciousness, and refer to it in its life to be of precious value, and the parliament considers that it is not necessary to include it in the preamble because it would offend a small group of another nationality or descent, we have to ask the question: do we live in a democratic country, or in democratic totalitarianism? Analyzing the preamble, one gets the impression of an unjustified fear. It seems as if the authors would want to dilute the feeling of a national tie and its identity build among others on the basis of faith, replacing it by a right to the minority. So the Christian, national majority should be the hostage of the minority. This would be unfair, and conflict generating.

(Michalik, in Zubrzycki 2001:638)

Michalik's statements confirmed the PRCC's ambivalence towards democracy. The protection of minority rights, one of liberal democracy's central premises, was not one of the Polish Church's priorities, certainly not when it came to defending traditional, national and religious values. The civic values upon which modern democracies are based came second to religious-ethnic nationalism. Although Michalik was referring to a contemporary discussion, his idea may be traced back to Cardinal Wyszyński's 'theology of the nation' and his vision of building a religious-ethnic community opposed to the secular state (see Czackowska 2009 and Majewski 2010). Pope John Paul II also often emphasised that the two most important constituents of humanity are nation (not society) and family—a view that the Polish Church has eagerly taken up in the constitutional debate.

Michalik's argument was also very much in line with the position of radical and Catholic right-wing parties and groups, which opposed the new constitution on similar grounds. Back in 1992, Wiesław Chrzanowski, a prominent Christian-National Union politician and intellectual, said that "The nation consists of people among whom certain values are formed, a certain culture

which is the heritage of the past', and thus favoured a close link between Church and state (Chrzanowski 2005:274). During the constitutional preamble debate, another right-wing intellectual, Wojciech Cejrowski, went further, declaring that a 'foreigner who settled in Poland recently and received Polish citizenship will have as much right to decide on matters of the Nation as the descendants of Tadeusz Kościuszko [an 18<sup>th</sup> century Polish general and military leader]' (Cejrowski in Burnetko and Press 2007). Cejrowski's fears of foreign domination were marked: he described certain new, non-Polish citizens as 'slant-eyed Vietnamese (...) for whom a Christmas Tree is a ridiculous custom and Holy God in Trinity is the result of reincarnation' (Cejrowski, in Burnetko and Press 2007). The same ethnic understanding of nationhood was widely adopted by the right-wing parties that formed the AWS and won the 1998 elections (Wenzel 1998:144). The Episcopate's official position was that the law-makers should acknowledge the importance of the 'Polish Nation' as a key subject of the constitution, rather than Polish citizens (Gowin 1999:243), a crucial distinction favouring an ethnic (and religious) understanding of the electorate.

The second basic constitutional notion—defining the source of the country's legal order—also turned into a major debate in Poland. The Episcopate's expectation was that the law-makers would list God-given natural law as the supreme source of rights, standing above the positive law decreed by the secular state (Czackowska 1997). This demand was questioned even within the Church, however, as it went beyond the legal practice of any democratic state. The head of the Episcopate's own constitutional team, Father Remigiusz Sobański, challenged the Episcopate's position by asking: 'Who would be competent to declare incompatibility with natural law?' and declaring this demand impossible to realise (Sobański 1997). President Kwaśniewski stated that 'in no secular country with a neutral worldview does natural law stand above positive law' (Kwaśniewski, in Zubrzycki 2001:646), but a pamphlet published by a prominent Catholic journalist in 1997 accused the new constitution of 'rejecting natural law, and

accepting solely the laws constituted by the state', thereby 'rejecting our Latin civilisation and reliance on Byzantine civilisation' (Burnetko and Press 2007:37).

This discussion of natural law extended into another, even more important debate: that pertaining to the place of God and religion in the preamble. The *Invocatio Dei* controversy was strictly related to the Church's agenda and its desire to include God and Christianity among key terms of reference in the newly democratic state, a wish that it had pursued consistently since the 1980s, starting from the negotiations with the communist government (as we saw in chapters 3 and 4). This notion was treated as a priority, and both the Church and those politicians who favoured an *Invocatio Dei* drew upon the most radical arguments to support their point of view. Primate Glemp said that 'for the faithful Polish society, placing God's name [in the constitution] equals national identity and ideological sovereignty; it represents the will to refer to the Supreme Good that can be acknowledged by everyone, not necessarily through an act of faith' (Glemp 1995).

It is important to note that, according to Polish Church hierarchy, the constitution should not only make a clear reference to God, but specifically to the Catholic vision of God, and omit any references to non-religious value systems. In his reaction to an early constitutional draft containing a reference to God and humanist values, Primate Glemp expressed his opposition to 'atheism enriched by Masonic ideology', and stated that 'As Catholics, we will decidedly stand for the presence of a reference to God in the preamble. We want a real God in the Constitution' (Glemp 1997). Archbishop Michalik seconded the primate's view, asserting: 'God is not a kind of philosophical, Masonic idea, or a vague New Age god' (Michalik 1997).

The Church's decisive action against embedding humanist values within the constitution, combined with a massive campaign in favour of a 'God clause' within it, influenced the final shape of the constitutional preamble. The latest draft, presented by the constitutional commission of parliament, was based on a private proposal published by Stefan Wilkanowicz, a Catholic journalist, in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, back in 1996. The proposal included a reference to

God as a source of universal values such as truth, justice, goodness and beauty, leaving space for 'those not sharing such faith [in God] but respecting (...) those universal values as arising from other sources' (Constitution 1997). The 'other sources' indicated in the preamble had not been named, as they had been in the previous drafts. In addition to this principal reference to God, the preamble contained two more references to religion. It mentioned that Polish culture is 'rooted in the Christian heritage of the Nation', and recognised the nation's 'responsibility before God' (Constitution 1997). Christianity was presented in a positive light, as one of the pillars of national culture. No other religious tradition was named, which, in view of Poland's rich history of multiculturalism, underlining the non-inclusive nature of the constitution (Borecki 2007:12).

The preamble debate, completed with the acceptance of the *Tygodnik Powszechny* draft, constituted a huge victory for the Church and its allies. Although the issue of *Invocatio Dei* and the definition of nationhood were the Church's top priority in terms of discourse and its symbolic influence on Polish public life, a number of other constitutional issues attracted its attention during the constitutional drafting period. The most important of them was the model of church-state relations and the related issue of religious freedoms in the constitution.

The shape of church-state relations was particularly sensitive. As Poland started to develop towards a liberal democracy, there were widespread calls for the separation of state and Church, following the West European model (as we saw in Chapter 2). The separation policy, pursued mostly by left and centre political parties, including the SLD and the UW, proved difficult for right-wing parties and the Church. This was largely due to the negative experiences of the communist period. In Chapter 3, I set out how the communist government positioned itself as a secular regime and favoured the separation of state and religious matters, while effectively discriminating against and repressing religious institutions and limiting the presence of religion in public life. Although the new democratic order meant that the separation policy had a different meaning to the communist one, historical associations prevailed. Back in 1992,

Wiesław Chrzanowski said that he did not believe in the 'confessional neutrality of the state' (Chrzanowski 1992). Primate Glemp expressed similar views, even when his own Social Council adopted a position calling for state neutrality in matters of religion. Glemp contended that 'a free Christian nation has the right to a Christian state' (Agnosiewicz 2003).

Parliamentary lawmakers initially planned to follow the liberal democratic model, and proposed an article on church-state separation and one on the neutrality of the state in religious matters. The first clause was immediately challenged by the Church, and the law-makers promptly replaced it with the a declaration of the 'autonomy and mutual independence' of both institutions, thus making Church and state equal and elevating religious organisations to semi-official status, a status not granted to anyone else in the Polish constitution (Nowakowska 1995). Additionally, the relations with the Catholic Church were supposed to 'be determined by international treaty concluded with the Holy See, and by statute' (Constitution 1997). This arrangement clearly put the PRCC ahead of other denominations, but fell short of the pre-war constitutional clause recognising Catholicism as the principal religion in Poland. Due to the pressure exercised by minority churches, notably the Polish Orthodox Church and the Adventist Church, the article declared that all churches and religious organisations had equal rights (Borecki 2007:11; Constitution 1997).

A substantial part of public opinion challenged this state of affairs, accusing parliament of favouring the PRCC over other denominations. Father Józef Krukowski, head of the Catholic University of Lublin's Canon Law Department, and himself a prominent Church intellectual, said that the Church's adversaries had a 'primitive understanding of egalitarianism, based on likening equality to identity of all religious denominations, which is contradictory to justice' (Krukowski 1999:32). The Episcopate not only did not acknowledge parliament's conciliatory stance on the issue, but actually went further in its demands by protesting against the second clause—the 'neutrality' of the state in Church matters. Primate Glemp criticised the commission for using this term, linking it with the communist policy of persecuting religious organisations.



As a consequence, parliament proposed a new one: the state would be ‘impartial’ in matters of personal conviction (Korboński 2000:137). Together, the discussions of the contents of Article 25 made it the most widely contested article in the whole constitutional debate. This demonstrated the Church’s continued ability to prioritise its agenda in public matters and successfully campaign for its view to be adopted as official and state-sponsored.

The next pillar of the Church’s constitutional campaign, supported by right-wing parties and religious organisations across the country, pertained to issues perceived to be of high moral value by the Church, including marriage and family. The question of abortion, so important for the Church’s post-1989 agenda, was again at the forefront of the discussion. The first draft of the constitution granted all citizens the right to life. Bowing to the Episcopate’s request to put more stress on preventing abortion, the lawmakers produced an article according to which the state ‘shall ensure the legal protection of the life of every human being’ (Constitution 1997). Some members of the Episcopate escalated their demands, and required that the constitution ban abortion outright, but the tensions that had already arisen around the issue, and the reluctance of some bishops to aggravate the conflict, mitigated these demands (Gowin 1999:245). The Episcopate also insisted that parliament rule out homosexual marriages, and this plea was swiftly accepted by the constitutional committee: Article 18 of the final constitutional draft declared that marriage is a ‘union of a man and a woman’ (Constitution 1997).

The last group of the PRCC’s demands in the social sphere of the constitutional debate pertained to parenting and children’s rights. The Church had long favoured a traditional family model, and the proposed article on family did not please the bishops. The law stated that parents ‘shall have the right to rear their children in accordance with their own convictions’, which was in line with the Episcopate’s arguments, but also made clear that upbringing must ‘respect the degree of maturity of a child as well as his freedom of conscience and belief, and also his convictions’ (Constitution 1997). And it was this last clause that provoked the PRCC’s concerns—about the possible intrusion of the state in matters of upbringing and the potential

granting to children the right to have a voice in their fate. This seemingly innocuous, common-sense statement provoked the PRCC's protests. Archbishop Michalik said bluntly that the constitution 'protects family, but gives children rights, which is bad' (Czackowska 1997).

Despite the fact that the Church managed to attain most of its principal goals regarding the drafting of the constitution, including the *Invocatio Dei*, the Concordat and the definition of nation and marriage (amongst others), the PRCC did not support the final constitutional draft, which was subject to a referendum in May 1997. Although previously supportive of the process, the Church decided to reject the document in its totality and engage in a high-profile public campaign of opposition, criticising and undermining the document and its authors. This was done in co-operation with the Church's political allies, notably the AWS, which hoped to get re-elected on the wave of anti-constitutional protest, and which tabled its own constitutional proposal (see Wenzel 1998).

The range of anti-constitutional arguments used by the PRCC and its allies was very broad. The above-quoted Archbishop Michalik summarised them well in his 1997 interview:

It does not defend life and does not promote natural law. It does not oppose deprivation. It does not consider social good, privatisation or property. It promotes liberty, but limits religiosity. (...) It instates the right to silence, which is dangerous, as it can lead to banning evangelisation and religion. It is also bad that it allows for a transfer of sovereignty to other states.

(Michalik, in Czackowska 1997)

Marian Krzaklewski, the AWS leader, drew a symbolic parallel between the anti-constitutional campaign and the Church's anti-communist activity by claiming that the 'Nation', represented by the AWS, could not accept the constitution produced by ex-communists, and used the famous PRCC expression *non possumus* ('we cannot'), previously used by the PRCC in opposition

to Stalinist repression in 1953 (mentioned in Chapter 3). The AWS thus offered a merger of patriotic, national and religious values in a political-religious alliance that was meant to overcome the rule of post-communist parties and lead to the rejection of the constitution in the May referendum. By comparing the constitutional draft to a 'Bolshevik avalanche', Krzaklewski called on Poles to unite against another (perceived) foreign threat (that is, suggesting that the constitution was drawn on the inspiration of the West) by following the voice of 'their' Church. The culmination of the anti-constitutional campaign came in early May, just days before the referendum. The Episcopate published a communiqué openly calling for the rejection of the constitution, as it raised 'serious moral doubts' (Communiqué 1997). The communiqué was a negation of the PRCC's earlier declarations of political neutrality, and further aggravated the political conflict surrounding the constitution. Although it was accepted in the referendum and entered into force a few months later, the constitution remained a contentious issue, and was used by the PRCC in later public debates, e.g. during the European integration debate to show that it allows for the EU to control Poland (see comments below on the European integration debate).

All in all, the constitutional debate was a good example of an all-out public campaign initiated and co-ordinated by the Church within the public sphere. It proved the Church's ability to influence policy-making and promote its agenda in Polish politics. In many ways, it was reminiscent of the Church's activity in the 1989-1993 period, both through its intensity and the methods employed by the Church to achieve its goals. Additionally, the campaign proved that politicians from left-wing parties were equally prone to PRCC lobbying, and that they were ready to accommodate PRCC demands even in the most strategic areas of law-making. And once the Church had secured its strategic interests in the constitution, it became more involved in one of the main political debates of the last two decades in Poland: European integration.

## European integration

Integration with the European Union was one of the main challenges that the Polish state and society faced after 1989. It was a long-term process, encompassing a number of social, economic and cultural changes, and engaging all social and political groups. Although the European integration process did not concern religious affairs directly, it was perceived as a major modernisation trend affecting Poland's national identity, and defining the future of the country. As such, it remained at the centre of attention not only for the PRCC but also other religious groups and organisations, and often involved discussions about the country's religious identity and the role of religion in public life. Moreover, as it was a negotiation process between virtually all social groups, it also involved the PRCC as a stakeholder and one of the key participants.

Although other religious groups and churches were involved in the European integration process at different stages, the PRCC played the most pro-active role and entered the debate on Poland's European future in the early 1990s, continuing to contribute all the way up to the referendum on Poland's accession in 2003 and beyond, once the country had already entered the European Union.

Immediately after the fall of communism in 1989, the overall attitude of the Polish political establishment and society towards Europe—and wide-ranging integration with Euro-Atlantic structures such as the EU and NATO—was overwhelmingly positive. Additionally, there was a certain expectation that Europe could gain from Poland's EU entry. Gowin (1999:225) wrote that this attitude was a mix of 'hope that our country (...) will become a fully-fledged member of the community of nations of Europe', but also that it will 'be a role model' thanks to its moral and ethical record during the communist period. Bishop Kowalski asked rhetorically in 1991: 'shouldn't it be our ambition to change the way of thinking [of Europeans] through our entry to the so-called European home?' (Kowalski 1991). This attitude marked the Church's subsequent attitude towards the European Union: underlining the exceptional character of

Poland's religiosity and the role that Polish Catholics could play in revitalising European religion.

The first wave of Euro-enthusiasm was, however, the result of a certain 'freedom shock' that Poland experienced in the first months and even years of democratic transformation, a period marked by a general openness towards the West and a willingness to embrace all things Western, exemplified by the radical economic reforms pursued by Leszek Balcerowicz in the first years of economic change. As the most rapid and chaotic transformation period came to an end, the European Union became less than a symbolic embodiment of Poland's longing to 'rejoin Europe', but more of a complex pattern of co-operation that offered benefits to Poland, but also applied new pressures and demanded changes in the country.

The Church's attitude to Europe developed in a parallel fashion. The Episcopate gradually started to voice its first reservations about the integration process, positioning Catholic Poland against the decadent West, a rhetoric that accompanied the Church's European policy for years to come. The change in the PRCC's position, which took place in 1991, was only the first of many turns that the Church's European strategy took over the next dozen years. Indeed, evaluating the PRCC's stance towards the European Union between 1991 and the 2003 referendum enables us to assess the Church's lack of coherence, its internal struggles and overarching tendency to maximise its institutional power in a changing political environment.

Once the PRCC had positioned itself against European integration in 1991, it started building a coalition of political and social groups that would identify with its stance on the issue (Leszczyńska 2008). Catholic, right-wing parties, including ZChN, were the Church's natural allies in this respect. Since 1992, the Christian-National Union was the only major political party that opposed the ratification of an agreement between Poland and the European Communities. Henryk Goryszewski, one of ZChN's leaders, warned that as a result of the agreement Poland would find itself 'among the wolves', and that it would lose its national identity (Goryszewski 1993). Concerns about national identity, traditional values and the place of Poland in a united

Europe dominated the PRCC's discourse on European affairs during this period. The Church was looking for a new place in the public domain (see previous chapter), and positioned itself as a defender of national-religious values and an opponent of modernity. The European Union, however distant in terms of Poland's potential membership, was seen as a major modernising force, preaching secular, liberal Western values that potentially threatened not only the traditional vision of society supported by the PRCC, but also the PRCC's own position in public life (Zielińska 2008).

Despite this growing opposition, it must be noted that, although the Church was sceptical of European integration, and sometimes voiced its concerns regarding this process, the issue was not among the PRCC's key priorities before 1995, as confirmed by Bishop Pieronek (Pieronek 1995:25). However, in 1995, as Poland began to co-operate with the European Union, and as the new president declared the will to accelerate the integration process, the Church's anti-European rhetoric intensified and broadened in scope. The arguments presented by members of the Episcopate that year were representative of the PRCC's catalogue of reservations about the European Union, and modernisation in general. Primate Glemp warned in a *Jasna Góra* sermon that Europe was about to weaken Central-Eastern European countries, including Poland, on three levels: 'economic, lifestyle-moral and religious' (Glemp 1995).

These three areas had dominated the Church's anti-European rhetoric for a number of years. The Church's economic concerns focused on the purportedly ultra-liberal and ruthless face of European capitalism that it believed would take over Poland once the country entered the EU. It feared that Poland's weak and underdeveloped economy would fall prey to European giants. In Bishop Stefanek's words, the European common market was a place where 'the strong (...) buy the weak and turn them into slaves' (Stefanek, in Czackowska 1995). In addition to these economic reservations, lifestyle-related and moral concerns focused on the issues that the Church had already indicated in its campaigns from the early 1990s: abortion, euthanasia and

homosexual marriages. The last tier of the Church's reservations focused on the EU's potential to accelerate secularisation, privatise religion and decrease the authority of the Church (see Wiścicki 1996). Here, Primate Glemp again revealed his sympathy for conspiracy theories by declaring that 'ruthless business people striving to enfeeble the countries of Central and Eastern Europe' so that 'they can pose no threat by its potential, especially the spiritual one' (Glemp 1995b).

This mass anti-European campaign looked increasingly out of place in a country that otherwise embraced modernisation, and where most political forces, except the extreme right, set European integration as their main foreign-policy goal. Unsurprisingly, then, the position of the Episcopate proved hard to defend. Support for European integration among Poles was strong—in 1994, 77% of respondents supported Poland's membership bid, 80% in 1996 and 63% in 1998 (Stadtmüller 2000:39). Numerous pro-European statements coming from liberal Catholic circles, including *Tygodnik Powszechny* and even some bishops (including the influential Bishop Muszyński of Gniezno), suggested that the Episcopate's official position, as expressed by Glemp, did not even reflect the voice of a stable majority within the PRCC. The anti-European rhetoric presented by Church officials was also at odds with the Vatican. John Paul II had long advocated for the European integration process, starting with the reunification of Eastern and Western Europe, hitherto divided by the Iron Curtain. The Pope's call for Europe to 'breathe with two lungs' (John Paul II 1988:8) accorded well with those in Poland who supported European integration after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

All of the above-mentioned factors ultimately contributed to the Episcopate's re-evaluation of its official position. And so it must be noted that, although the official position of the Church changed greatly after 1997 and over the next couple of years, there remained serious divisions within the Church, mostly within the top echelons of the Episcopate, regarding the future of Poland's European integration. This was reflected in the Church's behaviour in the pre-referendum campaign of 2003 (see below).

The first signs of the Church's changed position on Europe came in 1997, soon after Pope John Paul II's visit to Poland. As we have seen, the Supreme Pontiff often referred to the contemporary political situation in Poland in his sermons, and made frequent comments on the challenges to European integration. This was mostly presented as a positive development, and the Pope encouraged Poles to embrace their European future. In his speech on the occasion of the anniversary of St. Adalbert's death, John Paul II referred to a new wall dividing Europe; this time not physical, but mental and spiritual, built through racism, prejudice and lack of European solidarity. He further called for Europe to be a community, not only of peoples but also of spirit, repeating his wish for a spiritual dimension to European integration (John Paul II 1997:271-277). This was widely interpreted as a request for the Polish Church to accept the European integration process as unavoidable, and to engage positively with the challenges lying ahead.

The results of the Pope's words were soon made apparent. During a sermon in the autumn of 1997, Bishop Pieronek, one of the most pro-European members of the Episcopate, said that European integration was a challenge and a 'great apostolic assignment' for the Church, and that 'Europe should not be feared' (Pieronek 1997). As confirmation of his words, the Polish Episcopate organised a tour of European institutions for its members. Some authors (Korboński 1999; Leszczyńska 2002 and 2008) suggest that the visit played a decisive role in the Episcopate's change of heart. The opportunity to familiarise themselves with European institutions, and the role that issues of social solidarity, equality and religious freedoms played in the EU, may have influenced the bishops. Other authors (Gowin 1999) point to the fact that the visit was the symbolic expression of a reformed Episcopal European policy. However, it can also be argued that the Church noticed that public opinion was supportive of EU integration, and that the PRCC's opposition to the process might provoke a backlash (Zielińska 2008).



In any case, post-1997 developments have shown that the change of direction is a more long-term phenomenon. The public statements of Church officials after their return from Brussels confirm this: Bishop Pieronek said that ‘one should not abuse the Church for the purpose of anti-European demagoguery and fuelling anti-European sentiments’ (Pieronek 1998:130). Bishop Gocłowski went further in expressing a new Euro-optimism, advocating that ‘the Church in Poland never had any reservations concerning Poland’s entry to the European Union’ (Gocłowski in Leszczyńska 2002:131). The Pope issued another strong statement favouring European enlargement during his speech to the Polish Parliament in 1999: ‘Poland’s EU integration has always been supported by the Holy See’ (Knotz 2003:55).

At the same time, the split within the PRCC regarding European matters was increasingly visible. Right-wing and integrist groups, including the Radio Maryja Group, displayed radical anti-European sentiments. *Nasz Dziennik* wrote about European legislation being a ‘brutal attack against humanity, tantamount to an open struggle against the Catholic Church’ and an ‘ideology based on a horrible homo economicus (...) causing death and destruction’ (Bartnik 2000). Criticism of the EU was common among lower-ranking clergy and some local Catholic media (see Leszczyńska 2002:150-158). Nevertheless, parts of the hierarchy remained decidedly Euro-enthusiastic and supportive of enlargement, albeit with reservations, the principal of which was the issue of morality and religion in the EU. The Episcopate called for ‘restoring Europe for Christianity’ (Casanova 2003:202) and remarked that entering the Union was not essentially a threat, but an opportunity for and challenge to Polish Catholics.

The notion of opportunity and challenge returned with strength in the early 2000s, when a number of changes in Poland and in the European Union engaged the Church in yet another high-profile public campaign to defend its interests and promote its point of view, including a plea to consider the views of the Catholic majority. At the 2000 Nice Summit, the EU adopted its Charter of Fundamental Rights, a document enshrining human rights, including economic and social rights, within European legislation. It contained numerous references to issues at the

centre of the Church's interests, including clauses on equality, dignity, solidarity and citizens' rights (Charter 2000). Since Poland's EU entry was imminent, the Charter had the potential to influence the Polish legal system; the Church's primary concerns were that this would lead to the liberalisation of abortion law and the legalisation of euthanasia and homosexual relationships. The re-election of Aleksander Kwaśniewski as Poland's president in 2000, and the accession to power of the SLD in 2001, reinforced the Church's eagerness to engage in dialogue over European matters, as the PRCC feared that the new government will ignore religious arguments in the European integration debate.

The drafting process of the European Constitution, which commenced in 2002 in Brussels, brought co-operation between the PRCC and the Polish government back to its early 1990s level. This was an interesting phenomenon for a number of reasons. First of all, almost ten years had passed since the signing of the Concordat, and in the meantime the Church's involvement in Polish politics had grown more subtle and less intense (with exceptions, see above). Second, the co-operation surrounding the European Convention and pre-accession referendum that started in 2002 took place between the PRCC and a post-communist government and president—not Solidarity politicians, as had been the case in the early 1990s. Primate Glemp held two high-profile meetings with Prime Minister Miller (SLD) and President Kwaśniewski (formerly SLD) within a couple of months of each other. Both politicians reconfirmed the vital role the PRCC was to play in European affairs: the Prime Minister declared that 'the voice of the Church will be very important during the accession referendum' (Spotkanie Premiera 2002), and the President's chancellery announced that European integration should be understood not only as a political and economic process but also a spiritual one (Spotkanie Prezydenta 2002).

The draft European Constitution dealt with a number of issues previously raised by the Church on the occasion of debating the Polish constitution: *Invocatio Dei*, abortion, sexuality and national sovereignty. This time, however, the Church's pivotal role in the accession process,

particularly in the EU referendum scheduled for 2003, made the PRCC's support much more crucial. Polish politicians of all persuasions supported the PRCC's position, but the majority of European politicians refused to include references to Christianity and religion in the constitution; indeed, the final version of the European Constitution, published in July 2003, contained no references to Christianity. President Kwaśniewski, a former communist apparatchik and a self-declared secular social democrat, called the lack of Christian references in the EU constitution a 'misunderstanding', as 'Europe would not be what it is without its Christian roots' (Kolska 2003). The Episcopate was more radical in its assessment of the new EU document, calling it 'ahistorical and insulting towards the Fathers of New Europe' (Jackowska 2003:135).

In the meantime, another important public debate developed, with the PRCC playing an significant role. In the run-up to the pre-accession referendum, the pro-European government could not be sure that the vote's outcome would be satisfactory. To begin with, the voice of Euro-sceptical circles, including those within the PRCC who opposed the EU, was still strong. The turnover in the proposed referendum needed to exceed 50% of eligible voters; since electoral participation had chronically suffered in the post-1989 period, this threshold was not easy to meet. Both of these factors rendered the PRCC's support crucial to the government's referendum success. In December 2002 alone, Prime Minister Miller went to the Vatican to meet Pope John Paul II, and then hosted Primate Glemp in his office to discuss matters of European integration. Both dignitaries assured Miller of their support for the cause. It seemed that the government had secured this front in the European battle ahead. It was surprising, then, that the day after Miller's meeting with Glemp, the ruling party announced a plan to revise the abortion law in order to make it much more liberal. All of a sudden, the Church's support for European integration waned. Archbishop Muszyński claimed that the question of abortion 'could have significant influence on the citizens' standpoint before the accession referendum', thus suggesting that if the government were to go ahead with planned abortion reform, the

PRCC would withdraw its support for the EU (Muszyński 2002). The PRCC's prompt reaction to the SLD's abortion reform plans proved that the Church's support for European integration remained insincere, but it also demonstrated the PRCC's continuous leverage on government politics.

As a result of the PRCC's protests, the government swiftly dropped the abortion plans. Both Church officials and politicians denied that any deal had been made, but numerous sources claimed otherwise (Janicki and Władyka 2009). In January 2003, the government sent an official note to the European institutions informing them that the impending Accession Treaty should not apply to 'matters of moral significance and relating to the protection of human life' (Deklaracja 2003). A few months later, the *Sejm* rushed to reassure the PRCC of its loyalty in this matter, by adopting a special resolution declaring that 'Polish legislation is not limited by any international regulations within the domains of: moral order of social life, dignity of family, marriage and education, as well as protection of human life' (Uchwała 2003). Even though the two most important political institutions, the *Sejm* and the government, issued declarations reaffirming their support for the PRCC's position and annulling the previously tabled abortion legislation proposal, the PRCC's final word on European enlargement remained ambivalent. In a statement issued in early May, just weeks before the EU accession referendum, the Episcopate adopted a very indecisive stance on European integration. According to Leszczyńska (2008), the Church decided to provide moderate support for EU integration mostly because the majority of Poles supported it, and it was clear that the referendum would approve Poland's EU entry. Although bishops called for all Catholics to participate in the referendum, they warned against 'propaganda' coming from both sides, and reminded the electorate that Europe could only be united as a union of values and spirit (Słowo Biskupów 2003). Once again Pope John Paul II had to intervene: in an address to Polish pilgrims in Rome in late May 2003 he said that 'Poland has always constituted an important part of Europe and today Poland cannot exclude itself from this community' (John Paul II 2003).

The referendum took place in June 2003. An overwhelming majority (77%) of the voters supported Poland's EU entry. Afterwards, the accession support levels for EU integration remained constantly high. And, as the matter came off the political agenda, PRCC's interest in it dropped. Today, issues pertaining to morality and sexuality, as mentioned above, still remain at the centre of the Church's attention, and any European initiatives in the field are usually subject to PRCC scrutiny. All in all, however, European integration is no longer a contentious topic for the Polish Church, and does not merit much attention—mainly because Poland is now firmly embedded within EU structures. and there is little political controversy about European integration (Burgoński and Sowiński 2011).

### **Radio Maryja Group**

The Catholic media plays an important role in Polish social life. As of 2002, 43 Catholic radio stations were officially registered and operating (Fras 2002). The popularity of religious media is mostly due to the social significance of religion, not to the strength of the media outlets themselves, as they are mostly attached to local dioceses and have limited resources and little independence. There is one notable exception to this rule: the Radio Maryja Group, established by a Redemptorist monk, Father Tadeusz Rydzyk. The three main pillars of Father Rydzyk's vast media empire are a number of media outlets, a community of supporters and a network of political and business connections.

The history of RMG's development, and the influence Rydzyk exercises on Polish politics—including those in the highest echelons of power across the political spectrum—are an important testimony to the continued mobilising potential of religion in Poland. Quite importantly, this mobilisation takes place far from the decision centres of the PRCC. Although RMG media (see below) portray themselves as Catholic and focus greatly on religious content,

numerous cases of PRCC-RMG conflicts have shown that the Episcopate does not exercise authority over the group (Ideologia Radia Maryja 2010).

The media outlets constituting the Radio Maryja Group today include a radio station—Radio Maryja, the most important part of the group—a daily newspaper (*Nasz Dziennik*, ‘Our Daily’), a TV station (*TV Trwam*), a private university in Toruń (‘Wyższa Szkoła Kultury Społecznej i Medialnej’, College of Social and Media Culture), a charitable foundation (Lux Veritatis), a museum and an array of other projects—all with a strongly nationalist-Catholic profile, often in conflict with the PRCC’s official position (RM website 2007).

RMG represents a strong integrist current within the PRCC, so-called ‘closed’ Catholicism, as opposed to the ‘open’ Catholicism of liberal and intellectual groups within the Church (Gowin 1999:344). The main features of the closed Catholicism represented by RM include identifying Polish national identity with Roman Catholicism, linking nation with state and opposing social changes and Western-style modernisation. The post-1989 democratic changes were perceived by the integrists as a period of anti-Catholic struggle. The alternative that they offered was anti-modernist revolution (based on the sense of belonging to a Catholic community) and opposing reforms and the liberal world order. This approach was, in many ways, a continuation of the Church’s activities during the communist era, with the communist enemy replaced by a liberal one (Ideologia Radia Maryja 2010).

The empire took over a decade to build up, from very humble beginnings. Initially, the station only broadcasted locally, but within the first couple of years it had managed to cover 80% of Poland’s territory. Rydzyk’s first major public appearance took place in 1994, when the station was about to receive its nationwide licence. RM competed with two major commercial radio stations, Radio Zet and RMF FM. In order to secure a licence as a privileged ‘social medium’, Radio Maryja had to convince the state media watchdog, the National Broadcasting Council (‘Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji’, KRRiT), that it operated as a non-commercial outlet, and that its main focus was religion and prayer. Rydzyk embarked on a vociferous public

campaign advertising his radio as a purely religious initiative that required the support of all believers. At the same time, he started portraying all those opposed to RM's privileged status as enemies of the faith and of God. His media campaign resulted in over 50,000 letters of support being sent to the KRRiT (Piskała and Potkaj 2007:88). Thanks to Rydzyk's skilful campaign, RM was granted the licence it wanted, with the support of all politicians on the KRRiT board, including post-communists, who were usually opposed to granting exclusive privileges to religious broadcasters (Czubkowska and Rzeczkowski 2006). After receiving the status of a social broadcaster, Rydzyk started expanding the influence of his radio station (and then other media) beyond the Church and religious matters. From the very first years of operation, Radio Maryja, and then other parts of RMG, actively participated in Poland's public life, and often got involved in politics.

As we saw in Chapter 4, the 1995 presidential election was highly contentious, and a number of religious media and other organisations became involved in the electoral campaign. None of them, however, did so with the dedication and fervour of Radio Maryja. By 1994, RMG had already acquired a rather bad name among the general public as an anti-liberal and nationalist media outlet for its attacks on Jacek Kuroń, a former opposition politician and a presidential candidate, focusing on his purportedly 'Stalinist' past and Jewish background (Piskała and Potkaj 2007:70). During the last months of the election campaign, when the principal right-wing contender, Lech Wałęsa, faced the threat of defeat from other right-wing (albeit more liberal and less pro-Church) candidates, including Kuroń and Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, chairperson of the National Bank of Poland, RM engaged in a smear campaign against the latter two. In its typical style, it offered a call-in platform for its listeners, allowing them to voice all sorts of concerns about, and hurl insults at, politicians whom RM did not favour. Both Kuroń and Gronkiewicz-Waltz were accused of hiding their ethnic (i.e. Jewish) origins and connections to Freemasonry (Czubkowska and Rzeczkowski 2006). RM's activity contributed

to Wałęsa's success in the first round of elections, but did not stop him from losing in the second round against the post-communist candidate.

Having established itself as a considerable power source in national politics, RM continued meddling in government and parliamentary life. In 1996, it became involved in the anti-abortion campaign, when the socialist-dominated parliament initiated work on an abortion liberalisation law (discussed in Chapter 4). Rydzyk frequently appeared on air declaring that MPs supporting the liberalisation were 'prostitutes' who should have their heads shaved (Makowski 1998). Although certain voices within the PRCC strongly disagreed with Rydzyk's contentious methods, no formal action was taken against the cleric.

Encouraged by growing popular support—it was now the fifth most popular radio station in Poland, with a listener base of almost five million (Millward Brown 2006)—Rydzyk moved on from offering a forum for opinions to intervening directly in elections and government. In the 1997 parliamentary election campaign, Rydzyk mediated with the AWS to get RM-supported politicians and activists onto electoral lists. As a result, over 30 of them, including an RM announcer, Anna Sobecka, became AWS MPs. As one of Rydzyk's former co-workers testified, 'Father-Director' (this was Rydzyk's nickname as head of the station) used to regularly contact 'his' MPs, and not only instruct them about the station's policies, but 'simply call them up and reprimand' them in cases where he did not agree with their actions (Czackowska and Rzeczkowski 2006).

After the creation of a daily newspaper and the opening of a satellite TV station, Rydzyk's influence increased considerably. At the same time, RM maintained the contentious, privileged status of a 'social broadcaster', which gave it numerous tax and licensing benefits. The PRCC made moderate attempts at curbing Rydzyk's political activity by creating a special Pastoral Care Team to supervise RM's operations (Episcopate 2002). Despite this, RMG's highly political activity continued. Before the 2001 parliamentary elections, Rydzyk proved yet again that he held the key to the support base of radical and nationalist voters. Although the



AWS maintained its right-wing and pro-Church rhetoric, Rydzyk decided that it was time to withdraw its support for the AWS and champion a new political formation. The establishment of the LPR contributed to the AWS's total defeat in the elections and the emergence of a new, more radical right-wing party. The LPR, despite its very short history and lack of clear leadership, secured 8% of the vote and 38 parliamentary seats. Most LPR MPs openly pledged allegiance to Rydzyk and his radio station. But this short-lived political alliance ended when the LPR endorsed the results of the 2003 EU referendum, which Rydzyk decided to boycott (Czackowska, Rzeczkowski 2006). Yet again Rydzyk showed his outstanding political instinct when he decided to support the Law and Justice's (PiS) electoral campaign in 2004 and 2005. Once PiS won the parliamentary elections, Rydzyk found himself close to the highest government officials. For their part, PiS generously rewarded RMG for the support rendered to them, dispensing government grants and exclusive coverage of government events for *TV Trwam* (see above).

After PiS's and LPR's defeat in the 2007 elections, RMG retreated to opposition, with only occasional support for PiS's political activity (Ideologia Radia Maryja 2010). Rydzyk once again chose temporary political alliances over consistent support for any one political party or faction, which would make him dependent on the prevailing political climate; in the unstable party politics of contemporary Poland, this strategy allowed him to be constantly present in politics simply by switching between allies.

Although to date Rydzyk has been present in Polish public life for almost two decades, nothing seems to endanger his popularity or power. As mentioned above, the PRCC has tried to curtail his controversial political activity on numerous occasions, but without much zeal or success. In 2006, even the Vatican stepped in to curb Rydzyk's active defiance of Church authority (Purvis 2006), which temporarily limited RM's meddling with national politics, but this had no long-term effect. Despite this disapprobation, individual bishops do not refrain from

visiting his station, and frequently appear in his programmes. In 2007, over 20 bishops visited RM and *TV Trwam* every month (Bishops in Radio Maryja 2010).

Rydzik and his empire seem to be resistant to all forms of control and supervision, even those coming from state authorities and the judiciary. The character of Rydzik's zealous entrepreneurial activity has been put into question on numerous occasions. As outspoken opponents of economic liberalisation, RMG became involved in a number of controversial business initiatives aimed at supporting Polish enterprises against foreign competitors and saving them from bankruptcy or takeovers. The most prominent case involved a public fundraising campaign to buy back the famous Gdańsk shipyard from the state. Even though hundreds of millions of dollars of donations were collected, no money was actually spent on the takeover, and the money's fate is still unclear (Morawski 2006).

Besides his shady business activities and interest in behind-the-scenes lobbying in government politics, Rydzik's power lies in RMG's strong listener community and its potential to mobilise public opinion behind causes he favours. Since the early years of their creation, RM radio, the newspaper and the TV station have been known for their coherent nationalist-religious, anti-liberal rhetoric. The most frequently targeted 'enemies' of RMG include: left-wing and liberal politicians, the homosexual community, foreign and private capital, the European Union, the United States, Jews and other religious minorities, private media companies and all those who dare to disagree with the 'Father-Director' (Kowalski 1997).

Radio Maryja's ultraconservative rhetoric has become a powerful unification theme for sections of Polish society that feel dispossessed in the wake of the ideological and economic reforms pursued since 1989. Radio Maryja provides a voice for them by promoting and creating a group identity based around key conservative-Christian values and radical-right political ideological discourses. Such a strong group identity, and an accompanying negative attitude towards alternative opinions, has led to exclusion, and does not foster open dialogue within Polish civil society. By providing fertile ground for conspiracy theories, and by inciting public

opinion, Radio Maryja's radical discourse divides Polish public life and undermines the authority of religious organisations, most notably the PRCC and the Vatican. For almost twenty years, the authorities of the Polish Church have been unable to curtail the political activism of Father Rydzyk and his empire. Despite direct criticism from the Vatican and endless Polish groups and organisations, Radio Maryja is free to broadcast as the 'Catholic voice in your home' and contribute to the public presence of integrist, right-wing Catholicism. The PRCC hierarchy chose the controversial and antagonising influence of RMG over Church unity and its public image as a politically neutral and democratic institution. This shows that maintaining a high public profile for Catholic media, however controversial, was more important than maintaining a distance from politics and projecting a consistent image of the Church. It also showed that Rydzyk's political alliances were valued by the Episcopate, thus providing him with a safety-net despite the controversy he caused (Szostkiewicz 2007, 2010). But RMG's activities are not the only area of activity where the Church has defied public opinion and even the Vatican in pursuing controversial activities in the public square.

### **The PRCC and Jews: the Jedwabne controversy**

Even though today's Poland is largely mono-cultural and mono-confessional, the country's multicultural past (discussed in Chapter 3) makes intercultural and interfaith relations an important and sensitive topic of public debate. Although relationships between different Christian denominations play a significant role in Poland's public life, and issues such as the growing Muslim presence and NRMs (New Religious Movements) occasionally attract media attention, most inter-religious controversies in post-1989 Poland centre on Christian-Jewish relations. They often become the focus of public debate, and are a source of major controversy within both political and civil societies. The relations between the PRCC and Poland's Jewish

community, as well as its relations with world Jewry, remain an important marker of the public prominence of religion. Many of the issues in question pertain to statehood, national history, memory and modernisation. Because of the religious dimension of the Polish-Jewish dialogue, the Church has secured an important place as a stakeholder in most important issues pertaining to Jews and Judaism in Poland's public life.

The post-1989 Polish Jewish community is estimated at around ten to fifteen thousand people (Krzemiński 2003). Despite such very low numbers, Jews and Judaism remain present in Poland's public debate, mainly because of the historical importance of Jews in Poland, but also because of contemporary issues such as the Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel, which of course remain important for various political, cultural and economic reasons.

Although Polish-Jewish relations are now reviving, anti-Semitism remains a challenge for Polish-Jewish and Christian-Jewish relations. A 2002 opinion poll showed that 24% of Poles share the conviction that 'Jews have too much influence on Polish politics' (Kublik 2002). Numerous international organisations point to the fact that, although anti-Semitism no longer takes the violent forms that characterised it in the past, the authorities are not doing enough to prevent it (Contemporary Global Antisemitism 2008; ECRI 2010). The rapid changes of the 1990s, the economic transformation and the revival of many nationalist and right-wing political factions have all exacerbated anti-Semitic sentiments and raised concerns about Poland's ability to cope with its multicultural past (Bauer 1990).

Despite the importance of Polish-Jewish and Christian-Jewish relations, as well as widespread concerns about the communist government's anti-Jewish activity (Kersten 2000), the PRCC's policy towards Jews during the communist period was inconsistent, ranging from indifference to minor attempts at dialogue (Checinski 1982; Żaryn 2001). The situation started to change after the fall of the communist regime, but the progress was not substantial. The PRCC's controversial record of dealing with Polish-Jewish and Christian-Jewish dialogue post-1989 confirms that the Church was far from ready to face up to its controversial past and address

religious and political pluralism in the new reality. This was particularly visible during one of the most important public debates relating to Poland's wartime past, and Polish-Jewish relations in the aftermath of World War II: the Jedwabne controversy.

Jan Tomasz Gross's *Neighbours*, published in 2000, provoked huge public controversy and heated public debate on Poland's wartime history and national identity. The book describes the mass-murder of a Jewish community from the north-eastern Polish town of Jedwabne by their non-Jewish neighbours in July 1941. The evidence provided by the book suggested that the pogrom was initiated by the Polish Catholic majority, without any opposition from the local authorities—including the local priest—and was carried out with particular brutality (Gross 2000). Gross not only challenged the popular image of Poles as victims of World War II, but also provoked a nationwide debate on Polish anti-Semitism (Szarota 2001). Although Gross is a historian, his research contravened earlier findings regarding Jedwabne and was subsequently challenged by other academics. The Institute of National Remembrance ('Instytut Pamięci Narodowej', IPN), a state body responsible for prosecuting Nazi and communist crimes, launched an official inquiry into the pogrom. The most contentious issues that the IPN focused on were the responsibility of the Polish (Catholic) community of Jedwabne for the mass-killing of their Jewish neighbours, the role of the local Nazi troops and the reaction of local authorities. Many intellectuals and politicians called for a public apology from the Polish authorities, however, regardless of the outcomes of the official inquiry. Other responses varied: from ignoring the call for an inquiry entirely, to setting out radical opposition to the publication of Gross's book and its conclusions, including accusations of an anti-Polish and anti-Church plot involving the powerful international Jewish lobby (Szarota 2001).

The controversy surrounding the religious aspect of the pogrom—the Catholic majority killing a Jewish minority—required the PRCC's response. Its initial failure to react to, and later to engage with, the most important challenges resulting from this case were important indicators of the Church's attitude towards religious pluralism, and to Poland's national identity and

wartime history. Not only did the PRCC fail to take a stance during the first months of the debate, but, by allowing some of its clergy and even more senior officials to issue conflicting and often radical statements regarding the tragedy, it undermined its own authority and further exacerbated the conflict over Jedwabne.

The Jedwabne debate did provoke an immediate, angry response at a local level, and one of the most fervent critiques of Gross and the book was by Father Edward Orłowski, priest of the parish church in Jedwabne. According to Orłowski, 'the media provoked' the Jedwabne case, and they were to blame for an attack on the city's good name; thus Orłowski suggested a widespread conspiracy behind Gross's book and the debate that followed (Pytlakowski 2001).

Orłowski's words went unnoticed by the PRCC, even though Orłowski's superior, Bishop Stanisław Stefanek, shared his own conspiracy theories in a 2001 sermon in Jedwabne. Stefanek referred to the 'Shoah-business' as the main reason behind the Jedwabne controversy, remarking that 'the best business profit is made on the innocent blood of the slaughtered Jews and we have to be aware of whose displeasure we expose ourselves to when we talk about it loud. That is why such enormous mechanisms have been launched' (Stefanek 2001). Stefanek used the rhetoric of conspiracy during another sermon in June 2001. On this occasion, the bishop contended that he had been previously warned about a possible 'attack' on Jedwabne, and that money was the main motivation of the conspirators (Winnicki and Lizut 2001). This idea was also supported by Prelate Jankowski, who claimed that Jews were trying to impose an enormous 'extortion' on 'poor Poland, devastated by Nazis and communists' (Jankowski 2001). All of these statements demonstrated that popular anti-Semitism, so widespread in the Church before 1939, was still an issue affecting Polish-Jewish relations and the Church's public standing in the new millennium.

It must be noted that the rhetoric of conspiracy and struggle advocated by Jankowski and Stefanek an isolated voice within the Church. Bishop Henryk Muszyński, the former head of the Episcopal Commission for Dialogue with Judaism, explained in *Tygodnik Powszechny* that,

even though a complete account of the events that took place in Jedwabne in July 1941 might never be established, the debate on Polish-Jewish relations was necessary, and could possibly be very fruitful for both sides (Burnetko 2001). Father Michał Czajkowski, the president of the Polish Council of Christians and Jews, signed a letter together with key Solidarity leaders calling for Polish repentance and mourning for the Jedwabne victims, without even waiting for the final results of the official inquiry. He also called on Poles to participate in the official Jedwabne anniversary ceremony on July 10 2001 (Graczyk 2001). In a similar manner, Bishop Tadeusz Pieronek said that admitting sin is unconditional in Christianity, and that Poles should admit their guilt in the Jedwabne case if it were proved by the inquiry (Graczyk 2001).

Despite a number of conciliatory voices, however, senior PRCC officials sided more often with the radicals—both by failing to restrain them and by pursuing their own controversial policies. In response to numerous calls for public reconciliation between the Church and the Jewish community, the Episcopate proposed its own commemorative church service in the name of the Jedwabne victims and ‘all the evil that the Jews originally experienced from the Poles’ (Lizut 2001). Yet the significance of this conciliatory step was undermined by the fact that the Episcopate decided to act alone. Furthermore, Primate Glemp put the whole reconciliation process into question by embracing the Jedwabne conspiracy theories and declaring that the ‘trend for [Rabbi Avi] Weiss and the Carmelite order passed, now it’s time for Gross and Jedwabne’, suggesting that the whole Jedwabne case was planned and administered by the Jewish lobby (Kamiński 2001). Glemp also cited Jewish participation in the Soviet administration during wartime Poland as a possible justification for the pogrom. Furthermore, Glemp rejected the arguments of those who wanted to ‘force a reply’ from the PRCC by suggesting that an apology was due from the Jewish community for communist crimes committed by Jewish members of the party (Kamiński 2001).

Glemp’s tendency to combine a conciliatory tone with anti-Semitic stereotyping was reaffirmed in an interview published in May 2001, in which Glemp decided to reveal the

background of the Episcopate's Jedwabne policy and some of his own views on Jews and Jewish-Christian relations. In his opening remarks, Glemp said he was not convinced that the PRCC should be involved in the Jedwabne debate, and that Gross's book had been written at someone else's request. When asked about the nature of the planned commemorative service, the Primate complained about an anti-Church campaign, and said that, since the Polish Church had previously apologised to Jews in 1990 (referring to the letter on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*), this should be enough (Glemp 2001).

He further shared the Episcopate's doubts over the reciprocal character of the apologies. He said that the Episcopate wondered if the Jews should also apologise for their support of the Soviets, their participation in the security apparatus of the communist state and their co-responsibility for transporting Poles to Siberia. The Primate also offered a brief comment on Polish pre-war anti-Semitism, stating that Jews were 'smarter than Poles' and knew how to abuse them. Glemp then claimed that 'strange Jewish folklore' was one of the main reasons for negative attitudes towards Jews (Glemp 2001).

In March 2001, the PRCC decided that no official document from the PRCC was necessary in the Jedwabne case. The spokesperson for the Episcopate, Father Adam Schultz, said that 'the statements on the Jedwabne massacre made by Primate Glemp and other bishops fully present the Church's attitude to this painful drama', and that 'the Episcopate will not issue an official statement in this respect' (*Nie będzie* 2001). The Episcopate finally decided to organise its own commemoration ceremony with a Mass on May 27 2001. The venue and date for the Mass had been carefully, if very interestingly, selected. The All Saints Church in Warsaw stood next to the walls of the Jewish Ghetto during WWII. The church's wartime provost, Father Maurycy Godlewski, had been known for his anti-Semitic sermons and activities before the war, but he had then saved Jews from the ghetto (Graczyk 2001). Ironically, a year after the Jedwabne Mass it was discovered that the bookshop located in the basement of the church sold anti-Semitic publications. Local Church authorities, although previously informed about this fact,



reacted only when informed by the local press, by ordering the owners of the bookshop to remove the publications (Cisłak 2002). The date of the service fell on the eve of the feast of Shavuot, an important Jewish holiday, making it impossible for Poland's Chief Rabbi, who was invited as the main representative of Poland's Jewish community, to attend (Sabor 2008). It is impossible to imagine that the PRCC's authorities did not know about the holiday, putting in doubt the sincerity and desire for interfaith dialogue of the planned service (Dębowski 2008).

All three of the case studies described above demonstrate the PRCC's ambivalent and dubious attitude to interreligious and intercultural dialogue. Even though the Polish Church made some attempts to embrace Poland's multicultural past and engage in contemporary debates on Poland's national identity—as being composed of multiple cultural elements—a number of controversial statements and actions put the Church's ability to function in a multicultural environment in doubt. And anti-Semitism remains a major challenge, both for the Episcopate and for low-ranking clergy. The PRCC is still not able to engage in regular dialogue with other faith and civil society organisations, and does not respond well to attempts at revising the more controversial parts of its own history, or those of Polish nationhood (Borowik 2008). On the other hand, the Church seems content to facilitate right-wing and extremist integrist groups within society for the sake of maintaining its high public profile as an institution—reminiscent of its treatment of RMG (see above). There is little evidence of any regard for minority religions or secular-minded groups. Attempts at dialogue are usually conducted in such a way that they focus on the Church's own interests and policies.

### **Law and Justice Government (2005-2007)**

The 2005 parliamentary and presidential elections in Poland were an important development in relations between religion, politics and public life. The general and presidential elections marked a departure from the traditional left-right divide in Polish politics, and witnessed the rise of two

major conservative parties that still dominate the Polish political scene today. The parliamentary elections brought to power an exotic coalition of the conservative and populist PiS, the ultra-Catholic LPR and the peasant-populist SO. PiS became the largest political power in the country, securing 27% of the votes and over 33% of parliamentary seats (PKW 2007).

For the first time in post-1989 Poland, all of the coalition parties publicly and explicitly declared their allegiance to the Catholic Church, both before and after the elections. PiS did it in the most open and consistent way, both through seeking the support of the highest Church authorities, local bishops and priests, and by frequently declaring its pro-Christian agenda and boasting of its past successes in supporting the social doctrine of the Catholic Church (*Kandydaci* 2005). The religious establishment also participated in the public debate preceding the elections by commenting on various elements of party programmes important to the Church's agenda.

The substantial difference in the relationship between religion and politics before and after the 2005 elections lies in the increased presence of religious content in almost all spheres of Polish political life. Moyser's (1991) model of political secularisation provides a cohesive and precise framework for the analysis of this process within a modern state. Moyser's model will be used to illustrate the phenomenon of the re-emergence of religion in the Polish public sphere after the 2005 elections, looking at all five pillars of secularisation as devised by Moyser.

Moyser (1991:13) contends that modernisation processes foster the separation of religion and politics and trigger secularisation, constructing it as a complex, five-step process (see Chapter 2). The first stage of Moyser's secularisation model is constitutional secularisation, understood as the process of withdrawing constitutional recognition of the state for religious institutions, so that the state no longer defines its goals in religious terms. Constitutional secularisation was never complete in post-1989 Poland, and religious and secular groups did clash on a number of occasions when defining the level of constitutional secularisation—whether during the 1997 constitution debate, European integration or the Concordat (see earlier in this chapter and Chapter 4).

The policies proposed and partially pursued by the post-2005 coalition have led to a new dynamic in the constitutional secularisation debate. Law and Justice's main policy documents and pre-election declarations suggested that PiS's most prevalent political concept, the so-called 'Fourth Republic', was aimed at revising the foundations of the relationship between the state and the Church, as well as re-addressing the country's Catholic legacy and its place in public life. The whole project, gradually constructed by PiS from the early 2000s, was both a complex ideological declaration and a policy document. It was mainly based on questioning the achievements of post-1989 Poland, presenting it as a corruption-ridden private republic ruled by an informal network of ex-communist security-service officials, party apparatchiks and greedy businessmen. According to PiS, this state of affairs could only have ceased under its own rule, and the Third Republic should therefore be replaced by a new, reformed state and society (Kaczyński 2003).

Calling for a return to traditional values in public life, putting nation and family first and promoting Christian morality were at the forefront of the 'Fourth Republic' project, promoted during the parliamentary campaign. These ideals featured with similar frequency in Lech Kaczyński's presidential campaign, as expressed on his posters. Kaczyński's main election slogan was 'Prezydent Czwartej Rzeczypospolitej' ('President of the Fourth Republic') (PiS website 2007). One of PiS's flagship policy documents was the draft new constitution, presented before the 2005 elections. Its preamble proclaimed: 'In the Name of God Almighty! We, the Polish Nation, thankful to God's Providence for the gift of regained independence' (PiS Constitution 2005). In obvious opposition to the status quo (the current preamble referring both to believers and non-believers; see above for details of the 1997 constitutional debate), it provided no space for those citizens of the Fourth Republic who did not belong to any religious denomination.

In most cases, the constitutional preamble remains in the sphere of symbolic politics, but in the Polish case it goes beyond symbolism. As mentioned above, the 1997 preamble was

the result of a long and sophisticated political bargaining process between the main political parties of the time: the secular Democratic Left Alliance and Freedom Union, and the more Catholic-minded Solidarity Electoral Action.

The church-state model shift in the policies of PiS and the Kaczyński twins was substantial. In a declaration entitled *Catholic Poland in Christian Europe*, published at the same time as the draft constitution, Jarosław Kaczyński, then president of PiS and later prime-minister, declared that ‘throughout all our [Polish] history (...) Christianity is a fundamental fact of our national life’ (*Catholic Poland* 2005). The document proclaimed that the ultimate goal of PiS’s policies is ‘Guaranteeing Christian rules the place they deserve in social life is a necessary element of the moral renewal of the State’ (*Catholic Poland* 2005). The declaration contains further statements reconfirming PiS’s allegiance to the Catholic Church and the religious heritage of the country, proclaiming an active struggle to maintain the presence of religion in the public sphere. Moreover, PiS openly declared that it ‘rejects the vision of an ideologically neutral state as a façade for axiological nihilism’ (*Catholic Poland* 2005:7). During a meeting at the Soros Foundation in 2004, Jarosław Kaczyński revealed the mind-set of his party in the constitutional debate by saying that ‘we [PiS] are not hiding the fact, that the constitution should be based on a value system, that is the only socially known and binding in Poland’—by which he meant, basing the most important legal document in the country on Catholic values (Hartman 2007).

This constitutional support for a single religious doctrine was evident in actions undertaken by PiS both in their internal and external policies. During the difficult process of drafting the European Constitution undertaken by European politicians gathered at the European Convention, PiS MPs focused on securing a place for Christian heritage in the preamble, breaking the broad consensus among Polish political forces on promoting the unique formula embedded in the 1997 constitution (*Catholic Poland* 2005:4). The most tangible expression of PiS constitutional support for the Catholic Church came through the process of

drafting the 2007 budget, when it decided to support ‘Świątynia Opatrzności’ (‘Temple of Providence’), a multimillion building project undertaken by the PRCC with a PLN 130 million (approx. 30-million pounds sterling) budget. This church and museum complex in Warsaw is one of the flagship development projects of the Church, and a symbol of its revival after the fall of communism. It is meant to express the gratitude of the Polish Catholic nation to God for saving it from Swedish invasion in the 1600s, as promised in King Jan Kazimierz’s vows taken in Czestochowa, but never realised because of the partition of the country and the impact of wars and communist rule (as I mentioned in Chapter 3). Although the legislation on church-state relations prohibits the state from supporting religious establishments, PiS officials promised financial support back in 2005. Ultimately, the museum and educational pillar of the project had to be separated from the construction of the church, so that the state could legally support the investment—to a sum of PLN 40 million (approx. 7 million pounds sterling) from the 2007 state budget (Hartman 2007).

The constitutional de-secularisation of Polish politics under PiS rule was complemented by policy de-secularisation. Policy secularisation is a process which occurs when the state withdraws from policy domains previously dominated by the Church, and stops regulating social life on the basis of religious criteria (Moyser 2007). Two years of PiS government between 2005 and 2007 produced a reversal of this trend.

The main expression of policy de-secularisation was the reform of the education sector. As we saw in Chapter 4, the education debate was most lively during the early 1990s, and has remained controversial ever since. However, before 2005, the status quo, favouring the Church and right-wing groups, was not challenged. As a result of the 2005 coalition agreement, the Ministry of Education fell into the lap of the LPR. After the formation of Jarosław Kaczyński’s government, the ministry was headed by Roman Giertych, the LPR’s president. One of Giertych’s main policy initiatives concerned the instruction of religion in Polish schools, long a bone of contention in Polish politics, as we have seen. As religious education is not a part of

the official curriculum, pupils should theoretically be presented with the option of either following a voluntary class in Catholic theology, taught mainly by Catholic priests or nuns, or a class in ethics. As of 2005, fewer than 1% of pupils attend the ethics classes (*Religia na maturze* 2006).

Minister Giertych's agenda in this field was to include the marks obtained in RE classes on the final certificates that pupils receive at the end of each school year (*Religia na maturze* 2006). Moreover, Giertych proposed that religion be part of the new A-level exams as a voluntary subject, together with obligatory subjects normally taught at school. In the absence of a sustainable framework allowing for any alternatives (i.e. non-Catholic religions and ethics), Giertych's initiative would mean that most students would only be able to pass an exam in religious education, and that taking RE would improve the students' overall grades.

However, and despite these initiatives, the possibility that the PiS-led government could reverse overall trends towards policy secularisation are restricted by the Church's self-imposed limits on claiming the powers of the state. The PRCC was not willing to get actively involved in shaping educational policy beyond RE, which prevented Giertych and other like-minded politicians from increasing the presence of religion in education (*Religia na maturze* 2006).

In the case of institutional de-secularisation, however, such limits did not apply. This third stage of secularisation, as identified by Moyser, refers to the political saliency and lobbying power of religious institutions and groups acting as pressure groups, political parties and movements. PiS's accession to power left ample space for the reversal of institutional secularisation in many aspects of public life. The most visible expression of de-secularisation in the 'Fourth Republic' was the influence exercised by traditional Catholic groups and media on government policies, and the government's zeal to please the Church and its allies.

Radio Maryja, one of the most important communication channels for Polish Catholics, and an active participant in the public and political life of post-communist Poland (as we saw

earlier in this chapter), was the most vivid example of increased church-state co-operation after 2005. Radio Maryja's agenda was very much in line with PiS's concept of the Fourth Republic.

RM always relied on good relations with politicians, as one of the opinion magazines stated immediately after the 2005 elections: 'one pope, two presidents and seven prime ministers changed (...) since the creation of RM (...) but Father Director lasts and plays an ever larger role in Polish politics' (Czubkowska 2006). Even so, before 2005, RM's political influence remained more of a public secret than the open policy of the station or its political allies. The 2005 parliamentary and presidential campaigns suggested an impending shift in policy, however: Father Rydzyk openly promoted PiS candidates during some of the broadcasts, and largely contributed to the defeat of the liberal presidential candidate, Donald Tusk, in the second round of elections (Hołub 2005). The electoral victory of PiS was welcomed by all media constituting the RM empire, including the *Nasz Dziennik* newspaper and the *Trwam* satellite channel (*Ideologia Radia Maryja* 2010).

Since then, the alliance between the RM group and the government has gone from strength to strength. *TV Trwam* was given exclusive coverage of the signing of the so-called *Stabilisation Pact* between PiS and two populist soon-to-be-coalition parties (LPR and SO), which led to a major controversy (Wiśniewska 2006). Rydzyk's radio and TV outlets both overtly supported the PiS government and regularly criticised its opponents. Government officials were the only regular guests of RM's political broadcasts; some opposition parties, particularly the liberal Civic Platform ('Platforma Obywatelska', PO), were even informally banned from its premises.

And this alliance between parts of the Church (albeit unofficial parts) and the political establishment worked both ways. Grateful for the open support of its policies, government officials did not refrain from commenting positively on Church affairs and favouring its policies. The most symbolic act of this twinning was president Lech Kaczyński's choice of the Vatican for his first foreign visit. More casual expressions of the state's interests in PRCC business

included Prime Minister Kaczyński's enquiry about the possible moving of the seat of the Polish Primate from Warsaw to Gniezno (the historical capital of Poland), and President Kaczyński's intervention in the Wielgus case, where a primate nominee was accused of being a former communist confidante, and who was only asked to step down by the Vatican authorities after presidential intervention (*Rzeczpospolita* 2007).

The most prominent political events occurring during PiS rule pertain to the fourth stage of Moyser's secularisation model, however. Agenda secularisation occurs when issues and problems important in the political process lose their religious content. During PiS's rule, the religious dimension of policy-making, particularly of social policy, became more visible than ever before. The set of issues within the scope of the Church's interest have remained constant since the fall of communism: abortion laws, same-sex marriage, sexual education, the Concordat and various aspects of family planning, such as contraception and child benefits (Herbert 2003). PiS's *Catholic Poland* (2005) manifesto includes an explicit list of the issues of potential interest to the Catholic electorate and the Church, where the party authorities pride themselves on supporting the agenda of the Catholic Church in the law-making process. This has included the establishment of the National Day of Life (to counteract any liberalisation tendencies in relation to abortion laws), the rejection of the financial contribution of the state towards the costs of contraceptives and opposing those actions of the Government Plenipotentiary for Gender Equality that 'undermine the moral order' (*Catholic Poland* 2005:10), amongst others.

The PiS-LPR-SO coalition took the obligations presented in the *Catholic Poland* declaration seriously, and introduced a whole plethora of religiously motivated policies and legislation. No changes have been made to the restrictive abortion law, and no government support has been granted to the pilot programme to introduce the morning-after pill. The post of the Government Plenipotentiary for Gender Equality was abolished, and its powers have been transferred to the Family Unit at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (Ministry of Labour 2007). This last change reflected a long-term policy pursued by the PRCC, aimed at



decreasing the focus on gender equality and shifting the state's attention to family affairs (Dąbrowska-Szulc 2008; Stanosz 2010). PiS also sought to reinforce and extend the legal definition of marriage (as a union between a man and a woman) in order to block all future initiatives pertaining to same-sex marriages, which was another important PRCC demand that it had emphasised since the constitutional debate (*Biskupi* 2011). Minister Giertych ordered the withdrawal of the widely acclaimed Compass Manual for Human Rights Education, edited by the Council of Europe, from the teacher-training curriculum, on the grounds that it promoted homosexuality (Kula 2006). The government's strong conviction that sexuality should be considered and judged in religious terms was confirmed by President Kaczyński's speech at the 2007 National Forum on Europe, held in Ireland. President Kaczynski, when asked about his position on homophobia, replied that he was not homophobic, but was against 'the idea of homosexuality being promoted as an alternative to heterosexuality', maintaining that 'if that kind of approach to sexual life were to be promoted on a massive scale, the human race would disappear' (Kaczyński 2007).

Moyser's final stage of secularisation, ideological secularisation, occurs when 'basic values and belief-systems used to evaluate the political realm and to give it meaning cease to be couched in religious terms' (Moyser 1991:14). All of the above-mentioned material relating to the previous stages of secularisation shows that in contemporary Poland many basic values and belief-systems functioning in the political sphere are closely linked to religion. PiS's rule strengthened this link. Maciej Giertych, a member of the European Parliament, father of the education minister and an LPR guru said during his presidential campaign of 2005 that the Church not only has a right, but an obligation to criticise state authorities, and they in return have absolutely no right to criticise the Church (Giertych 2001). This logic appears to be prevalent among the ruling elites of the PiS government. Jarosław Kaczyński, commenting on Bishop Wielgus's case, said that 'the Church should be strong, and the Primate's function serves this purpose' (Nosowski 2007). During the aforementioned meeting at the Soros Foundation,

Jarosław Kaczyński also stated that the Catholic value system, the foundation of the Fourth Republic, contains 'nothing that would be unacceptable for a non-believer, unless they are a personal enemy of God' (Hartman 2007). This view seems to confirm the inability of the right-wing parties to embrace any alternative worldviews, particularly those coming from the more secular-minded parts of public opinion.

Applying Moyser's model of secularisation to post-2005 Poland allows for the conclusion that most secularisation trends in the public sphere have been reversed. It is worth underlining that this process took place in parallel with Poles' growing negative attitudes towards the public presence of religion. Haynes's (1998) categorisation of religious responses to political developments provides a useful tool for examining the links between religious groups and institutions and politics as a way to foster de-secularisation and religious republicisation. Haynes lists the 'resistance to the disestablishment and the differentiation of the religious from the secular sphere', mainly used by fundamentalist religious groups (1998:7). The Polish political scene during the PiS-LPR-SO coalition was the stage of many expressions of this resistance—in the fields of education, family planning and many more—confirmed by the statements of Church officials and Catholic media, mainly from the RM group. The coalition's actions demonstrated that they did not see a clear divide between the secular world of politics and the religious realm, and that they wanted to influence political society through religious means, both directly and indirectly.

The second level of religious response identified by Haynes, namely the 'mobilisations and countermobilisations of religious groups and confessional parties against other religions and against secular movements and parties' (Haynes 1998:7), can also be observed in Poland's post-2005 politics. Its most vivid expression was the continuous support of the RM group and parts of the Church establishment for PiS during both the parliamentary and presidential campaigns (Kandydaci 2005). Mobilisations against other religious groups remain rare, mainly because of their low political power in a country dominated by the Catholic Church. Still, the most

important enemies of RM remain the Jews and Jewish organisations. It is debatable whether this hostility is religiously motivated; on most occasions, however, when the issue of Polish-Jewish relations comes back onto the political scene, RM has advertised various accusations against the Jews. During the Jedwabne case (as we saw earlier in this chapter), RM was mostly preoccupied with defending the honour of the Polish nation against a supposed worldwide, Jewish-led conspiracy (Edelman 2005). In 2006, one of the RM journalists was condemned for anti-Semitism by the Media Ethics Council, which did not stop PiS officials from publicly supporting and appearing in RM programmes.

With all of this taken into account, and with careful consideration given to the Polish political scene after the 2005 elections, we can see not just an absence of secularisation trends, but an almost complete reversal of them, despite a decline in individual religiosity and general opposition to the increased visibility of religion in politics.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have reviewed the relationship between religion and politics and public life after the initial period of systemic transformation in post-communist Poland until the fall of the Law and Justice government. Those fifteen years (1993-2007) were marked by a close relationship between the Catholic Church and all democratic governments, albeit with different degrees of intensity. Moreover, the Church and its allies, including the religious media, continuously maintained a high public profile and attempted to influence public life. What is more, the PRCC and its supporters attempted to monopolise public space in certain areas perceived as strategic by the Church, to the detriment of other civil society organisations and religious groups.

The Church remained most active in key areas of government policy and public debate, including the construction of Poland's new constitutional order, its growing economic and social modernisation and strategic areas of foreign policy, such as integration with the European Union. What is more, the PRCC remained a vigilant guardian of the status quo in certain policy areas, where it secured significant gains between 1989 and 1993.

By 1993, Poland had in place one of the most restrictive abortion regimes in the world. All attempts at revising the law in this area were challenged by the Church. The PRCC granted itself the right to represent what it claimed was the will of the people, and in doing so surpassed consultation procedures characteristic of liberal democracies. The issue of including religious education classes in the state education system was approached in a similar manner. And, once the PRCC secured a decision favourable to its policy goals, which happened in 1990-91, it refused to re-open the issue, and even used its bargaining power with governments and political actors to silence any further debate.

Although the Church defended its behaviour and the policies it implemented in the first years of transformation, a certain discourse shift can be observed as having taken place in recent years. First of all, Church hierarchs have become less prominent in their public statements on political issues, and usually resort to calls for calming the public debate—a strategy they used as a tool for silencing political opponents, particularly in areas where the PRCC had previously secured strategic gains. Second, the PRCC has learnt to selectively borrow from the vocabulary of civil society organisations, wherever it saw that this could be of material benefit. And so, when defending the presence of RE classes in 1993, PRCC framed it as a human-rights issue that the Church was defending because it had an interest in defending human rights. Furthermore, when the Church's public activity was challenged, the PRCC presented itself as only one of many social actors or civil society organisations, thus having the right to voice its concerns in the public square.

Conversely, on matters pertaining to national identity and statehood, the PRCC has not changed the stance it presented in the first years of democratic transition, and relies on its purportedly unique status. It consistently portrays itself and acts as the symbolic representative of the nation on matters pertaining to statehood and identity. During the constitutional debate, it fiercely defended the ethnic concept of nation, as opposed to the modern, civic understanding of the concept, and actively lobbied for religious values to be firmly embedded within the new constitution. This is justified through the fact that Poland is a country with a majority Catholic population and a strong religious tradition, thus making the Church a legitimate (and unique) actor in public life.

Additionally, the PRCC shows little regard for pluralism, neither allowing for other societal actors to be involved in public life nor engaging with other religious communities and organisations. In matters pertaining to intercultural dialogue or difficult issues of national history that have often been buried by communists and only later re-examined, it frequently sides with radical and extreme right-wing groups. The prevalence of radical elements within the PRCC is strengthened by the fact that the biggest Catholic media consortium in the country, the Radio Maryja Group, presents conservative, even xenophobic, views and opinions, constantly stirring up public controversy. Despite the fact that the PRCC is a hierarchical and centrally managed institution, it has not succeeded in bringing Radio Maryja in line with the official Church policy on such key issues as anti-Semitism, xenophobia and European integration, nor encouraging its direct involvement in politics in general.

Evidence from other policy-making areas (that have not been analysed in this chapter), including women's rights, sexual minority rights and health-care policy (notably with regards HIV/AIDS) suggests that PRCC's ambivalent attitude towards pluralism and democratic processes exacerbates the deficiencies of the Polish state in this regards. Fuszara's (2010) analysis of participation of women in public life in the first 20 years of transformation confirms a deep split within civil society organisations working with women's issues along religious lines, with

‘A division into organisations linked with a church (especially the Roman- Catholic Church) and those not linked with any, is the deepest division to be noted in the Polish women’s movement’ (Fuszara 2010:97). This is relevant in the context of the state’s and politicians’ continuous refusal to address issues of abortion and reproductive rights further to the initial ‘compromise’ reached between PRCC and the political parties in 1991-1993. Owczarzak’s (2009) review of the history of Polish HIV activism in the early 1990s through the prism of human rights, democratic reform and moral authority issues further confirms that the Polish state’s attitude to democracy in early years of transformation was often ‘not based on political participation but in the reassertion of state authority to control and disseminate knowledge’ thus encouraging the Church to provide ‘moral guidance to newly democratic and European Poles’ (Owczarzak 2009:432). In a similar fashion, the tensions between LGBT and feminist groups and state authorities that have recurred regularly since 2007 over the Pride Parade in Warsaw confirm the Polish state’s difficulty to fully embrace democratic pluralism twenty years since its introduction (Regulska 2009:548-549).

The PRCC’s active involvement in Poland’s political life has been facilitated by the fact that political parties and groups, as well as state officials, eagerly co-operated with the Church on a range of matters, from government policy-making to campaigning, in turn offering direct support for the PRCC’s interests and policies.

The coming to power of a conservative, right-wing coalition between PiS, SO and LPR in 2005 showed that the unwritten alliance between the PRCC, political parties and government operates independently from voter preferences and public opinion, and has the potential not only to sustain republicisation, but to totally change the character of Polish politics and impede the course of the secularisation of public life.

## Conclusion

In August 2010, a violent dispute broke out in front of the Presidential Palace in Warsaw. Over a thousand angry protesters clashed on the square in front of the palace over the removal of a wooden cross commemorating the victims of the plane crash which killed the Polish president and over 90 high-ranking state officials and politicians on 10 April 2010. The cross, erected on 15 April by a group of scouts, stood in front of the palace until mid-September. Its removal was a source of a major political controversy that involved politicians from all major political parties, the government, the president and the thousands of protesters campaigning either for or against its removal. The protesters joined anti-cross marches and demonstrations and flooded social networks. The so-called ‘cross war’ exacerbated social tensions surrounding the place of religion in Poland’s public life. Jarosław Kaczyński, the late president’s twin brother, who also served a term as prime minister, made a public appearance at the cross site, laid flowers at its base and insisted that it should be allowed to remain in place. President Bronisław Komorowski stayed away from the presidential palace during the dispute, and set up a temporary office in another location. The president proposed to move the cross to a nearby church. Prime Minister Donald Tusk criticised Mr Kaczyński for politicising the issue.

The Church, although remaining in the centre of the debate, remained strangely absent from the solution-finding process. The PRCC found itself deeply split between more moderate clergy and a conservative, politicised hierarchy. Many from the latter group had openly backed Jarosław Kaczyński in his presidential bid earlier that year. Some members of the Episcopate remained reserved; Bishop Nycz contended that ‘It is not up to the church to solve this issue; it is the job of the new president’ (Nycz 2010). Others were much more critical: Bishop Pieronek, former secretary of the Episcopate, regretted that the Polish Church found a leader amongst politicians (referring to Kaczyński), and that it was not appropriate for the Church to side with politicians on political issues (Pieronek 2010).

Many commentators duly attributed the sudden eruption of the cross controversy to the contentious place of religion in Polish politics and the absence of a debate on secularising the public square (Sowa 2011). All of the above happened against the backdrop of rapidly declining religious practice and the falling authority of the Church among Poles. Since the fall of communism, the proportion of Polish Catholics attending weekly church services has dropped from 60% to just over 40% (Przeciszewski 2009). According to the World Values Survey, an overwhelming majority of Poles oppose Church leaders' influence on government and on voting behaviour—80% and 85%, respectively—more than in Western European states such as Holland or the UK (WVS 2012). Furthermore, the majority of Poles (66%) think that the PRCC's involvement in current political affairs is too high (Kościół 2011). If Poland has been rapidly modernising for over two decades, and if the social significance of religion as well as individual religiosity have been decreasing, why was the public profile of religion in this matter, and notably the Catholic Church, so high?

In the preceding chapters I have analysed the complex relationship between religion and politics in post-1989 Poland, with particular reference to the role of the Catholic Church. My main task was to explain why, despite processes normally associated with secularisation such as modernisation, differentiation and declining individual religiosity, religion managed to maintain high public visibility as well as considerable authority in politics and public life in general.

My main argument is that, while Poland experienced some individual secularisation, and although individual religiosity levels have fallen significantly (WVS 2012), in the public sphere religion has managed to republicise itself and maintain its public visibility due to the historical and cultural legacy of the communist era, as well as the close ties between religious institutions (notably the PRCC) and key pillars of the democratic polity (state, political society and civil society). Furthermore, I argue that individual and institutional actors, such as politicians, religious leaders and religious institutions, shaped the relationship between religion and politics far more than did sociological processes such as modernisation, differentiation and



rationalisation, which have taken hold of Polish society in the first two decades of democratic transformation. The interests and behaviour of state and political actors, as well as civil society organisations and religious bodies (again, mainly the PRCC) in the first period of systemic transformation (1989-1993) shaped the relationship between religion and public life, and preserved the high visibility of religion in Poland for years to come.

The conclusions of my thesis regarding secularisation and republicisation in post-communist Poland are divided into four parts. First, I discuss the influence of historical factors, notably the communist era, on the place of religion in Poland's public life today. My main argument is that the Church developed a central position within society, and a strategic relationship with communist state institutions and an oppositional stance in the communist era, making itself a key polity actor after 1989. Second, I discuss the importance of institutional factors in the transformation process. My main argument here is that the institutional dynamics of the post-communist polity and the newly shaped relations between state, political society and civil society (notably, the stability of the Church and instability of other institutions) were crucial for the republicisation and sustained presence of religion in public life. Third, I discuss the particularities of post-communism in the democratisation process and the role of religion and religious participants within it. Religious republicisation was particularly noticeable in the first four years of transformation, between the June 1989 elections and the signing of the Concordat regulating the relationship between Poland and the Catholic Church in 1993. Last but not least, I offer conclusions regarding the sustained republicisation of religion in post-communist Poland. I argue that the active role played by the PRCC and its political allies in the first years of transformation resulted in a political and institutional system that has lasted in Polish politics ever since.

While the conclusions of this thesis are primarily specific to the Polish case, they might also be tested and explored further with reference to secularisation and religious change in other contexts, especially in the CEE. The three main such hypotheses relate to the role of institutions

and actors, the significance of historical factors such as preactorianism and path dependency, and the need to use a broader range of indicators of secularisation, notably those focused on public visibility and the influence of religion.

### **Legacy of the communist era**

The merging of national and religious identity, reinforced through the partition of the country and foreign domination in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, was an important feature of Polish public life in the last century. Due to the major changes in the political and social landscape in the aftermath of World War II, religion and religious institutions were on the defensive. Over four decades of communist rule were a time of forced secularisation of public space, but the Church managed to retain some independence, and individual religiosity remained strong. As was shown in Chapter 3, the PRCC came out of the forty-year communist rule weakened institutionally (e.g. through land seizures and a lack of recognition in many political processes), but still maintained its position as the biggest non-state actor. Furthermore, figures of individual religiosity remained virtually unchanged for a generation (ISKK 2012). Despite the communist authorities' initial anti-religious zeal in the Stalinist years, the PRCC managed to secure the bulk of its presence in public life. Although many important areas of social activity previously accessible to religious institutions, such as education, health-care and charitable work, had been restricted to state institutions, the PRCC remained strong and independent, a voice of relative opposition against communism and an important focus of non-state activity and thought. The 1956 Khrushchev Thaw allowed the Church to slowly reclaim a part of the public sphere and work out a *modus vivendi* in relations with the state. The Church's resources and opportunities for action were limited, but its desire to act in the public sphere remained visible. As all other institutions were controlled by the state and the Party, the Church became an unofficial channel

for transmitting public and political opinion to the communist authorities. This phenomenon—praetorianism—had consequences for the Church's behaviour in post-communist Poland (see below). The PRCC's behaviour in the last decade of communist rule discredits its self-portrayal as an unwavering opposition force. As evidenced in Chapter 3, although the PRCC often defended human rights and stood up for the oppressed, whatever their background, its policy was largely based on defending its own institutional interests and privileges. This was particularly visible in the 1980s, when the PRCC tried to expand its public presence at the expense of other groups in the lead-up to democratic change. Merely a year before the first democratic elections in the Soviet bloc, the Polish Episcopate contended that a measure of the People's Republic of Poland's democratisation was the establishment of a Catholic social movement authorised by the government and mentored by the PRCC. Right before the first democratic elections in post-war Poland, in May 1989, the PRCC rushed to secure its exclusive legal status ahead of other religious and civil society organisations.

### **Polity triangle: state, political society and civil society**

The study of Poland's politics after 1989, conducted in chapters 3-5, revealed that the institutional dynamics of the new democratic polity were crucial for the republicisation of religion and its continued public visibility, along with that of the Church. Religious organisations—particularly the largest one, the PRCC—have been closely tied to all three pillars of the polity, including the state, political society and civil society.

The PRCC still enjoys unique recognition and support from the Polish state, despite the formal neutrality of the Polish government in religious matters, as well as the existence of a number of minority faiths and religious communities. Since the first democratic elections in June 1989, particularly in the first years of transition, state institutions have consulted the

Church on numerous occasions, particularly in the fields of education, reproductive rights and broadcasting. The Church did not refrain from exercising direct influence on government policy. Over the years, the PRCC became a regular partner in official government consultations, as well as conducting unofficial lobbying and policy-making. It is important to note that the influence of the Church on state institutions did not diminish over the years, but remained stable. In the first years of democratic transformation, between 1989 and 1993, there was a particularly close relationship between the state (including the parliament and the president) and Church institutions such as the Primate and Episcopate. Since the signing of the Concordat in 1993, those relationships have not been as close, but still remain vital for all parties involved. The relationship has grown less intense because of the opposition of public opinion to the Church's meddling with government politics, as well the coming to power of left-wing parties in 1993-1997 and 2001-2005. On the other hand, the relationship between the Church and government, as well as politicians, remained vital, as the PRCC relied on main political forces to secure the status quo in the key policy areas (education, reproductive rights, media). Government and political parties could also resort to the PRCC's help when they needed popular support (e.g. before the European Union membership referendum in 2003). The political parties' continuous support for the PRCC's agenda was particularly important to the Church, as the majority of public opinion did not agree with its stance on issues such as religious education and reproductive rights, and generally opposed religious leaders' involvement in politics (WVS 2012)

The above-mentioned process is related to the structure of the polity, notably the state and political society and the influence the Church exerts on them. A large number of Poland's post-1989 politicians are drawn from the Solidarity movement, which enjoyed a close, if complex relationship with the Church during the communist period. A number of political organisations, not only those stemming from Solidarity, pledge allegiance to Catholic values and the Church itself. Developments in Polish politics over the first two decades of transformation,

particularly those pertaining to social policy and other areas deemed strategic for the Church (analysed in chapters 4 and 5) have shown that the PRCC has allies throughout the political spectrum, and it is not confined by the traditional conservative/right-wing vs. progressive/left-wing divide. None of Poland's political parties in power since 1989 have challenged the Church's dominant position in social, cultural and economic life. Some individuals, particularly within left-wing parties such as the Democratic Left Alliance, have sought to limit the Church's influence and weaken its position in politics, but this has not been systematic. Over twenty years after the collapse of communism, the PRCC remains politically well-connected. The first years of transformation (1989-1993) provided a fertile ground for building political alliances, and the Church was much more active during the first four years of democratic rule; but, as the example of the Law and Justice government (2005-2007) shows, the Church was willing and able to re-enter the political landscape with a similar vigour to that which distinguished its actions after the first democratic elections. Conversely, individual politicians as well as political parties were eager to support the Church's agenda. This often happened without regard for party discipline (for politicians) or the preferences of voters (for parties). In cases such as religious education and abortion, it appeared that the PRCC and political parties operated in a vacuum, and public opinion or voter preference did not have leverage on policy-making. Last but not least, the PRCC remained an important influence on the development of civil society in democratic Poland. This was due to two principal reasons. First of all, the PRCC often acted as if it was not part of civil society, or that it was either against it or above it in terms of importance and rights. Second, when the PRCC positioned itself as a civil society organisation, it still often limited other actors, and, because of its sheer size as the biggest non-state organisation in the country, it overshadowed their development.

The first four years of the new democratic polity were marked by rapid reforms and rising tensions in the political, economic, cultural and religious realms. The main institutions of the old regime—the communist government and the communist party—collapsed. With

Solidarity's coming to power, important divisions started to arise within the movement. New political groups and parties were created. The Church remained the only major social institution internally unaffected by the regime change. It had to respond, however, to a much bigger external challenge: functioning in a new democratic reality, a surprising scenario for everyone at the time. Newly democratic Poland set about becoming a western liberal democracy, and this brought about tensions within social groups and institutions. Those favoured by the communists, such as state trade unions, farmers and industry workers, lost out in the new system. Those subjugated by the old regime, including Solidarity and the Church, could now enjoy new opportunities.

The Church entered the democratic public arena with confidence and an authority inherited from the previous era. The communist praetorian legacy made the Church the only mediating authority in society accepted by both the failing communist government and the emerging opposition. Once both of the great powers of pre-1989 Poland started dividing, arguing and standing against each other in democratic elections, the Church remained the last instance of stability. This gave the PRCC tremendous leverage and influence on political processes. As I have demonstrated in Chapter 4, the former opposition politicians were very quick to reaffirm their allegiance to the Church, and praised it for supporting Solidarity during communist times, giving the PRCC much more credit than it actually deserved. Part of the praetorian legacy was also the overall institutional chaos and lack of structured dialogue between government institutions, political parties and social organisations during the first transition period. This put the Church at the centre of the country's political life again, and gave it a chance to engage in both symbolic and institutional praetorianism by operating alongside newly democratic political institutions and marginalising other social actors. As a hierarchical organisation interested in controlling its members, and not involving them in decision-making, the PRCC positioned itself outside of, and sometimes opposed to, civil society. Statements issued by the Polish Church hierarchy in the early 1990s indicated that the PRCC did not

embrace civil society, and did not see itself as an essential element of a democratising society (Borowik 2008). The PRCC's involvement with state institutions, governments and political organisations suggested that it wanted direct access to political power, and as such could not be part of civil society. Regular meetings with politicians, electoral campaigning and involvement in policy-making turned the Church into a hybrid political and civil society actor. Since the mid-1990s, when the Church became less involved in politics and lowered its public profile, the PRCC has portrayed itself as a civil society organisation (as was the case in the EU accession debate—see Chapter 5), but it still refused to abide by the unwritten norms governing civil society. One of the main issues was the PRCC's attitude towards democracy and democratisation.

### **Democratisation**

After 1989, the PRCC's stance towards democracy and democratisation was ambiguous and inconsistent. On the one hand, the Church embraced the fall of communism and supported the opposition forces in changing Poland into a functioning democracy. On the other hand, it used the moment of weakness of the state and political society to gain significant power and influence in public life, bypassing democratic processes in order to do so. Once Poland became a new democracy, the PRCC officials often refused to accept democratic rules in areas they judgmentally deemed non-negotiable, such as abortion. In May 1989, when the election of a new, democratic parliament was imminent, Primate Glemp declared that 'abortion cannot be an object of political games nor the basis for judging parliamentary candidates' (Prymas 1989). As demonstrated in Chapter 4, during the debate on abortion legislation between 1989 and 1991 the PRCC was actively involved in the policy-making process, intervening with the government and parliament to demand a strict anti-abortion law. At the same time, the Church categorically

opposed a referendum on the matter, deeming it a fundamental issue that could not be decided by a popular vote (PO 1991b).

Due to the legacy of praetorianism, a syndrome by which the PRCC became the most significant non-state organisation channelling political dissent during the communist years, the Church remained an active political actor even when this was no longer a prerequisite of a functioning democracy. The Church still acted as a censor of the government's activities, and actively intervened in key policy areas that it saw as strategic, often undermining the state's legitimacy to act. During the constitutional debate in the 1990s, the Church presented itself as a voice of the nation—an attitude typical of symbolic praetorianism—and insisted on active participation in the process of defining core values and rules governing the state. By publishing its 'Position of the Conference of the Episcopate of Poland on the Axiological Premises of the New Constitution' (Stanowisko 1990) before the public consultation process on a new constitution had started, the PRCC positioned itself in the middle of a key political process. Later on, it became involved in shaping some of the new constitution's passages, notably the preamble, defending the views of a 'Christian, national majority' against the purported threat from minority communities, thus engaging in institutional praetorianism again (Michalik, in Zubrzycki 2001:638).

In a similar fashion, the Church fell into a pattern of path dependency. The PRCC's actions and statements on a number of key public matters in post-1989 Poland show that its institutional behaviour follows patterns developed in the communist era. Pickel (2011) suggests that cultural developments can determine the degree of secularisation in Central-Eastern European countries. And indeed, the historical legacy of the communist era influences the current behaviour of the PRCC, restricted and shaped by the relations with the state for over forty years. As the PRCC saw itself as a defender of morality during the communist years vis-à-vis a 'demoralised' communist state, it also expected to play the same role in post-1989 Poland.



The Church leadership had already engaged in political activity during the 1980s, and the first democratic elections merely accelerated this process. Although the country's rulers and society vowed to transform Poland into a Western liberal democracy and build a civil society, the Church's vision was not entirely compatible with these concepts. The account of the Church's involvement in the first elections between 1989 and 1993 presented in Chapter 4 demonstrates that political neutrality was not on the PRCC's agenda during these years. Quite the opposite—the Church now had not only the motive and means to participate in political processes, but also the opportunity to work directly with the state and political organisations. Cases of active campaigning by priests and the regular use of Church premises for political purposes were common. Not only did the Polish Church get directly involved in elections, but it also made sure its policies were embraced by the government as a result of direct co-operation between Church and state institutions. Advocating restrictive abortion legislation and broadcasting laws, and rushing religious education into schools are just a few examples of how efficient and persistent the Church was in pursuing its agenda. Those policy areas also show how accommodating the subsequent post-1989 Polish governments have been in terms of satisfying the key demands of the PRCC's behaviour, showing that in the first year of democratic transformation, although it agreed with the basic direction of democratic change, it wanted it to be based on Christian values and the social teachings of the Catholic Church as the dominant faith.

The most controversial elements of the Church's political activity, however, were not the policies themselves but the ways in which they were introduced. The Church, in co-operation with the authorities, eagerly bypassed any consultation processes and marginalised other social institutions, including minority religious groups and other stakeholders. While Primate Glemp was a regular guest in government and parliament offices, only two out of seven Polish prime ministers met with representatives of minority religions between 1989 and 1993 (Szarek 1993:233). Issues such as religious education or abortion law were decided almost

exclusively in co-operation between the PRCC and the government. This further confirmed the Church's unwelcoming attitude towards democratic bargaining principles in liberal democracies. Even if the PRCC sometimes presented itself as a civil society organisation, it did so only to show that 'it knew better what civil society's needs are, and was there to help achieve them (Borowik 2008).

The PRCC strove to maximise its institutional strength by securing a privileged status—not just through good relations with politicians—and by pursuing its policy plans, a pattern of behaviour typical of big and strong institutions eager to maintain high social authority. The Church's exceptional status in society was confirmed by the Concordat in 1993, making Catholicism *primus inter pares* in Poland's religious landscape. The creation of the Property Commission and the subsequent return of vast amounts of land and real estate—including the confiscation of public property such as hospitals and universities—have shown that the Church's plans are based on maximising its potential at almost all costs.

All of the above processes have become of great significance for the future of the young Polish democracy. The Church's continuous involvement in politics, and the politicians' eagerness to embrace the PRCC's political activity, have hugely influenced the slow development of Poland's civil society. The PRCC came close to becoming a monopolist in many important government consultations on policy issues: indeed, many religious minorities have been effectively marginalised. In the early years of transformation, the weak Polish state was unable to respond to attempts at limiting democratic pluralism. Evidence from different policy areas shows that lack of participation and exclusion of different social groups remains one of the main weaknesses of Polish democracy—and a weakness that the PRCC has aggravated.

This has also had a long-lasting impact on Poland's secularisation. Certain processes that would otherwise have taken place were virtually 'frozen' by the PRCC's rapid and total seizure of public life, including enforcing religious education, insisting on Catholic-friendly

broadcasting and applying a restrictive abortion law on a society that would otherwise be reluctant to embrace those policies.

Since 1993, a significant change in the Church's involvement in politics and the politicians' stance towards religion can be noted. The gradual normalisation of the reform processes and stabilisation of Poland's political institutions have transformed the relationship between Church and state, and caused the two spheres to become more separate. The return of the post-communists to power in 1993 also contributed to the government adopting a more reserved position towards religion. Most of the mechanisms developed in the first four years of transition, however, as well as key policies decided then, remained in place, and influenced the political and social landscape of the country for years to come, thus reinforcing path dependency.

### **Sustained republicisation**

After the first years of transformation (1989-1993), symbolically completed by the introduction of a new provisional constitution and the signing of the Concordat, the Church remained active in key areas of government policy and public debate, including the construction of Poland's new constitutional order, its economic and social modernisation and in strategic areas of foreign policy, such as integration with the European Union. What is more, the PRCC became a vigilant guardian of the status quo in policy areas, where it secured significant gains between 1989 and 1993.

By 1993, Poland had one of the most restrictive abortion regimes in Europe in place. All attempts at revising the law in this area were challenged by the Church. The PRCC granted itself the right to represent the will of the people, and in doing so bypassed consultation procedures characteristic of liberal democracies. The issue of including religious education

classes in the state education system was approached in a similar manner. Once the PRCC secured a decision favourable to its policy goals, which happened in 1990-91, it refused to re-open the issue, and used its bargaining power with governments and political actors to silence any further debate.

Although the Church defended its behaviour and policies implemented in the first years of transformation, a certain discourse shift can be observed. First of all, Church hierarchs were less prominent in their public statements on political issues, and usually resorted to calls for calming the public debate, using this argument as a tool for silencing political opponents, particularly in areas where the PRCC had previously secured strategic gains. Second, the PRCC learnt to borrow selectively from the vocabulary of civil society organisations, wherever it saw that these could benefit its actions. And so, when defending the presence of RE classes in 1993, the PRCC framed it as a human rights issue that the Church was raising because it had an interest in defending human rights. Furthermore, when the Church's public activity was challenged, the PRCC presented itself as one of many social actors or civil society organisations, thus having the right to voice its concerns in the public square.

Conversely, on matters pertaining to national identity and statehood, the PRCC did not change the stance it presented in the first years of democratic transition, and relied on its self-proclaimed unique status. It consistently portrayed itself, and acted, as the symbolic representative of the nation on matters pertaining to statehood and identity. During the constitutional debate, it fiercely defended the ethnic concept of nation, as opposed to its modern, civic understanding, and actively lobbied for a firm place for religious values to be embedded within the new constitution. This was justified by the fact that Poland was a country with a majority Catholic population and a strong religious tradition, thus making the Church a legitimate (and unique) actor in public life. Although the PRCC's institutional praetorianism all but ceased in late 1990s, its symbolic praetorianism remains vibrant.

Additionally, the PRCC showed little regard for pluralism, neither in allowing other societal actors to be involved in public life nor in engaging with other religious communities and organisations. In matters pertaining to intercultural dialogue, and difficult issues in national history—often buried by communists and now re-examined—it frequently sided with radical and extreme right-wing groups. The prevalence of such elements within the PRCC was strengthened by the fact that the biggest Catholic media consortium in the country, the Radio Maryja Group, presented conservative, if not xenophobic, views and opinions, constantly stirring public controversy. Despite the fact that the PRCC is a hierarchical and centrally managed institution, it has not succeeded in bringing Radio Maryja into line with the official Church policy on such key issues as anti-Semitism, xenophobia or European integration, nor into direct involvement in politics in general.

The PRCC's continued active involvement in Poland's political life was facilitated by the fact that political parties and groups, as well as state officials, still eagerly co-operated with the Church on a range of matters, from government policy-making, to campaigning to direct support of the PRCC's interests and policies. The coming to power of a conservative, right-wing coalition of PiS, SO and LPR in 2005 showed that the unwritten alliance between the PRCC and political parties and government operates independently from voter preferences and public opinion, and has the potential to instantly change the character of politics and influence the course of the secularisation of public life.

The two first decades of the Third Polish Republic (1989-2007) were marked by a close relationship between the Catholic Church and all democratic governments, albeit with different degrees of intensity. Moreover, the Church and its allies, including religious media, continuously maintained a high public profile and attempted to influence public life. The PRCC and its supporters continued their attempts to monopolise public space in certain areas perceived as strategic by the Church, at the cost of other civil society organisations and religious groups. This state of religious republicisation, alongside the secularisation of the private lives of the majority

of society (WVS 2012), remained a characteristic and stable feature of Polish public life during the first two decades of democratic transformation.

### **Understanding religious change: secularisation and republicisation**

The overwhelming body of research into religious change in today's societies indicates that the process is the primary result of independent, albeit historically warranted, social processes, including modernisation, differentiation, rationalisation and individualisation (Tschannen 1991; Norris and Inglehart 2011). For most Western European countries that were the basis for the original secularisation thesis, those processes have gradually led to increased secularisation and the declining social authority of religion. All of those processes can be identified in post-communist Polish society, and yet religion maintains high public visibility and remains salient in Poland's political life—a phenomenon that is to the subject of many studies by sociologists of religion both in Poland and abroad (Borowik 2008; Norris and Inglehart 2006).

After the first two decades of democratic transformation, Poland became a largely modernised European state with a rapidly weakening individual religiosity,<sup>12</sup> a phenomenon that the classic secularisation theories are not capable of explaining. The case study presented in this thesis shows that secularisation and republicisation can occur jointly, thus making it necessary to broaden the range of indicators of religious change. Rather than analysing macro-social processes or individual-level religiosity, our attention should be turned to individual and institutional actors as well as the historical and cultural context. Instead of looking at secularisation as a one-way, linear process, the Polish experience suggests that secularisation should be understood as a multi-layered process that is neither irreversible nor linear. My

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<sup>12</sup> Albeit still among the highest in Europe in terms of church attendance (WVS 2012).

research into Polish political life between 2005 and 2007 has demonstrated that political secularisation can be reversed in specific areas identified by Moyser (1991), including constitutional, institutional and agenda secularisation.

My thesis argues against an all-encompassing definition of secularisation that includes both individual and social factors. My research into Polish public life in the last twenty years has shown that religion maintains a high public profile, despite falling levels of individual religiosity. It is my contention that the main reasons for this have to do with the structure of Polish democratic polity (state, political society and civil society). The Polish Roman Catholic Church has emerged from the communist era as the single most significant unreformed social actor (as opposed to the key state actors—government, parliament, police and the army, amongst others all of which had to be either abolished or reformed—and political society actors, such as political parties—both PZPR and its satellite parties were dissolved). This has allowed the Church to enter the public sphere as a strong actor in the conditions of rapid reform of many strategic policy areas, under the aegis of the PRCC. As outlined in Chapter 4, the Church engaged in policy-making and became a regular partner of the government and parliament, and a frequent broker between main state actors, including Poland's president and others. On the other hand, political figures were openly embracing the Church, and often referring to the arsenal of religious arguments in support of their policies and actions in areas such as education, reproductive rights, mass-media and foreign policy. The efficient collaboration of key actors within the polity triangle (state, political society and civil society) with religious institutions resulted in a very rapid rise of religion's profile in public life. Between 1989 and 1993, the Church managed to secure key concessions in the priority areas of its interest.

The Church's behaviour, and the collaboration of state and political actors in this respect, can be explained through the instruments provided by Social Movement Theory, notably motive, means and opportunity (Mantilla 2010). The PRCC's main motive was securing its institutional interests and maintaining its position within the society. The Church's main

interests included retaining its material status (e.g. by reclaiming property seized by communist authorities), as well as maintaining social control through nation-wide instruments such as religious education in schools. All of the above have been secured due to concessions received from the state between 1989 and 1991. The Church possessed the means to realise its potential even before 1989, but the democratic transformation rapidly enhanced its means portfolio, including the possibility to operate freely as a religious and charitable organisation within a democratic state. Last but not least, new opportunities have arisen since the democratic elections and coming to power of the Solidarity movement, as the Church then had direct access to politicians and state institutions. Furthermore, the unique role the Church has played in systemic change, including brokerage between the communists and opposition, allowed it to claim unique status in the new reality, often bypassing or side-lining other social actors. The evidence of the high importance of institutional and political actors in the course of secularisation in Poland sustains Herbert's republicisation thesis. The social authority of religion in Poland remains high due to a combination of institutional and informal connections between religious actors and political institutions and groups, and religion has de-differentiated itself into a range of secular spheres, including education, media and politics, sustaining religion's high public profile.

By securing its key interests in the early period of transformation, and by maintaining a close relationship with political actors, the Church and pro-Church groups helped maintain a status quo in matters pertaining to religion in public life and church-state relations. Despite a relative normalisation of the relations between religion and politics, including a less visible public profile of the Church in the 1990s, religion remained a contentious issue in Polish politics, and was an important part of key policy-making discussions, such as the debate on European integration and family planning. My analysis of the activities of the Law and Justice government (2005-2007) using Moyser's five-step model of political secularisation has shown that many specific secularisation processes can quickly be stopped or reversed. While this is not a refutation of a broad secularisation thesis, it does suggest that secularisation is not a



straightforward story, and that republicisation can occur in parallel. Over the short period of the PiS right-wing government, the state became an active supporter of the Church, including financial donations for supporting Church infrastructure, implemented pro-Church reforms in education and family policies, and actively co-operated with religious media such as the Radio Maryja Group. PiS also tabled a proposal for a new Polish constitution that would officially recognise the country's Christian heritage and raise the profile of the PRCC in relations with the state (see Chapter 5).

All of the evidence presented above supports my argument that political and religious actors operating in a flexible institutional environment (most of Poland's political institutions have been either reformed, abolished or brought to life within the last 23 years) have the potential to influence the course of secularisation and contribute to sustained religious authority over society, regardless of individual religiosity.

In addition, this thesis has found that the dynamics of church-state relations and the overall relationship of religion and politics in contemporary Poland are highly dependent on historical and cultural factors. Although Poland is now a liberal democracy with a relatively stable political system, its past is very significant for the relationship between religion and politics. My research into the historical and cultural background to Poland's religious identity and the place of religion in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Chapter 3) points to the fact that at the end of the communist period in Poland, religion was seen as a largely positive force, particularly in the face of foreign domination: both historically, during the partition period (19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries), and contemporarily as a result of the communist rule imposed by the Soviet Union. Most researchers have focused on the Church's role as an opposition force (Gowin 2001; Żaryn 2003) and overlooked the PRCC's attempts at securing its own interests, often over the heads of other religious organisations and opposition groups (Dębowski 2008; Agnosiewicz 2008). Criticising the Church for its collaboration with communist authorities is a taboo in Poland's public life—and part of a wider taboo on criticising the Church and religion.

Critiques of the PRCC and its actions both before and after 1989 remained rare in the first two decades of democratic government. This fact was acknowledged by Church officials themselves, as well as by Catholic media (Bilewicz 2010; Turnau 2012). Poland's blasphemy laws are a constant source of controversy, and the Church and its allies are often accused of stifling criticism under the guise of defending religion rather than the Church as an institution (Mytkowska 2012).

Its positive image in society and within most of the political establishment has allowed the PRCC to become an active political player in the new reality after the fall of communism. What is more, the image of the PRCC as a much-needed censor of the government's activities (as it was in communist times) remained, and was used both by the Church and its allies as a justification for the Church's continued presence in the public sphere. In Chapter 4, I examined the relationship between religion and politics and church-state relations in the first period of democratic transformation (1989-1993). This was done mostly through the focal issues of educational reform, reproductive rights and the activities of the Ombudsman. The Church's behaviour in the new democratic reality was almost identical to its pre-1989 activity in the way that the PRCC saw itself as a representative of the nation vs. the government's 'external' intervention (Sabbat-Swidlicka 1993:20). The PRCC also censored the government's policy-making attempts, on some occasions refusing to recognise the democratic process and insisting that its viewpoint be acknowledged as non-negotiable, as was the case with the abortion law (Prymas 1989). What is more, any attempts at discrediting or weakening the Church's position were framed as anti-democratic, and the PRCC's allies contended that the Church's independence and activity are indispensable in the democratic reality, as the Church has the right to hold the government to account (but on the other hand, the government has no authority over the Church) (Giertych 2001). Such instances of path dependency (see Mahoney 2000), where an institutional actor (in this case the PRCC or political actors) behave in a certain way merely because of historical precedent (e.g. the Church being a censor of the government,

a true representative of the people and an institution whose independence is a matter of national survival) had a profound impact on religion's continued republicisation.

The evidence of the path-dependency of religious and political actors in post-communist Poland calls for a more careful consideration of cultural and religious factors—in line with the suggestion made by a number of authors researching the secularisation of CEE states that there needs to be a more nuanced, contextualised secularisation theory (Pickel 2009). This direction of research into religious change, considering the cultural and religious legacy of societies that may have even secularised on the level of individual religiosity and belonging, also corresponds with Norris and Inglehart's (2011) cultural traditions axiom, which suggests that worldviews originally linked with religious traditions are transmitted even in secular societies.

Based on an analysis of the relationship between religion and politics in Poland, this thesis argues that the continued public presence of religion is due to historical and cultural factors, notably the legacy of the communist era, which enabled the institutionalisation of a position of influence for the Polish Roman Catholic Church that was consolidated during the early post-communist period (1989-1993). It is the historical legacy of the Catholic Church, and the institutional interests of both the Church and key actors within the democratising polity, which preserve the status quo and sustain the republicisation of religion in Poland.

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